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AMERICAN L

# AMERICAN LITERATURE

## A TEXT-BOOK

FOR THE USE OF

## *SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES*

BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE

AND

LEONARD LEMMON

SUPERINTENDENT CITY SCHOOLS, SHERMAN, TEXAS

BOSTON, U. S. A.

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# PREFACE.

AMERICAN LITERATURE has of late been receiving considerable attention. Professor Moses Coit Tyler and Professor Charles F. Richardson have each published histories about it. Under the editorship of Charles Dudley Warner, a series of volumes on American men of letters is now appearing. Mr. E. C. Stedman, in conjunction with Mrs. Hutchinson, has followed up his "Poets of America" with a handsome array of tomes entitled "American Authors," and Mrs. Sarah K. Bolton's "Famous American Authors" does a similar thing on a much smaller scale. Many American authors have themselves been yielding to an autobiographical impulse, the fruits of which have appeared in magazines and newspapers. Mr. John Bigelow has won the gratitude of students by his exhaustive work on Benjamin Franklin; and Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, and others have been the subjects of various biographers. Our literary men seem in no immediate danger of being forgotten.

It is singular, therefore, that so few school manuals, devoted exclusively to American Literature, have yet been put forth. Until quite lately, almost the only approaches to such a thing have been in the form of supplements to manuals of English Literature, or of Universal Literature — essays of a dozen or a score of pages, appended in a shamefaced manner to the latter extremity of a volume. Shaw's "English Literature," for example, concludes with a very concise "sketch" of our leading writers, written by H. T. Tuckerman — a careful and scholarly piece of work, and good enough for English pupils, but quite inadequate to the needs of our own schools and academies. There can be no question of the expediency of affording the rising generation of this country an adequate notion of what American Letters really are. But books like those above mentioned are not suited to this purpose, and were not designed

for it. A school-book was wanted: something to be used in the class-room, to be studied for what it contained, and to indicate further lines of research where such are required. No work is so certain to lead to results of lasting value as that which is pursued independently.

To meet these needs, the present "Manual" has been written. In preparing it, we have examined books of biography and criticism, both well-known and obscure. We have had recourse to various public libraries, and to some private ones. Where authorities have conflicted, we have hunted down our facts through the columns of magazines, pamphlets and monographs. When no conflict existed, we have availed ourselves of the best published statements. But in the matter of passing critical judgments upon literary work, we have followed our independent conviction, and must be held responsible therefor.

Kindly aid has come to us from several sources. Mr. Charles W. Stevenson, of Warrensburg, Mo., and Messrs. H. C. Davis and C. C. Hemming, of Gainesville, Texas, have lent valuable books and papers. Dr. Leslie Waggener, chairman of the Faculty of Texas University, has given friendly counsel; and to these and other friends we return our hearty thanks.

The selections from the writings of O. W. Holmes, R. W. Emerson, J. G. Whittier, Bayard Taylor, J. R. Lowell, and H. W. Longfellow are used by permission of and arrangement with Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Publishers, Boston, Mass.

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# TO TEACHERS.

THIS manual is intended to be, not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It is not to be regarded as a substitute for independent literary study. It is a method and a guide; did it attempt to be more, it would attempt too much. At the present day it is hardly necessary to remind teachers of this.

Mastery of the lines of study herein marked out involves considerable reading on the pupil's part. Under proper encouragement and guidance, pupils will not be found to show aversion to reading. The practical experience of several years has convinced us that if a pupil be led with tact, and if the leader be himself an intelligent student, genuine interest may be awakened and maintained. Every human activity has found expression in literature, and no human mind can fail to find somewhere in literature congenial food. Longfellow may find an echo in those to whom Emerson is too remote. If Jonathan Edwards be too abstruse, try Irving's essays; or his "Knickerbocker," should Bancroft seem dry. Something can be found to suit every grade of development and variety of temperament.

It will often happen that those features in a book which please the pupil, are not those which a cultivated judgment would prefer. Enlightened appreciation of literature is a plant of slow growth. What one gets from a book depends on what one brings to its perusal. Let not the teacher, therefore, feel discouraged. If ninety per cent of a beginning class dislike poetry, do not try to convert them by argument; read them Longfellow's "Paul Revere," or Browning's "How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," or Campbell's "Hohenlinden," or even Cowper's "John Gilpin"; and before you have finished, their conversion will have commenced.

It has been left to the teacher to supply questions involving rhetorical criticism, when such are deemed desirable. Youthful literary enthusiasm is apt to be checked by over-insistence upon technical details. The thought is the vital thing, and should be the goal of early study. "Poetry," says Matthew Arnold, "is a criticism of life." Do not lead the pupil to suppose that it is an illustration of rhetorical and metrical rules.

Such questions as have been included in the volume are suggestive mainly. Encourage the pupils to ask and answer questions of their own. Make the class a forum of free literary discussion; thus stimulating interest, increasing critical acumen, impressing striking features and revealing the tastes and ability of the pupils. Make them tell in their own words the substance of their yesterday's reading. Cause the author and his work to live in their minds, and you will not find them lacking in proficiency.

Standard writers are now obtainable at so cheap a rate, that any one may afford the material for a year's reading in connection with this manual. Lovell's twenty-cent "Library," for example, contains Bryant, Willis, Poe, some of Whittier and Longfellow, Cooper, Irving and Emerson. Selections from the best American authors are to be had at fifteen cents a number in Houghton's Riverside Literature Series. Complete editions, when accessible, are of course to be preferred to selections; and the spread of free libraries tends to smooth the way. The objection of expense, at all events, is not a serious one.

A list of useful reference-books is appended. They should be comprised in every school library.

Notice of errors detected in this volume, and suggestions and criticisms looking to its improvement, will be thankfully received by the authors.

# INTRODUCTION.

In criticism, as in biography, the optimist does best. For true optimism implies not indiscriminate complacency, but belief in growth towards higher states. It is faith in man's destiny, and in the Divine ordering thereof. In dealing with the subject of American literature, optimism is not expedient only, but indispensable. Unless we can see promise in it, there is not much, as yet, that we can see. After a few great names, — to be told off, perhaps, on the fingers of one hand, — we are at the end of our original creative geniuses. All the rest are either reflections of these, or of European models, or else are really nothing at all but print and paper.

**The point of view.**

There is no ground for discouragement in this. Genius, like other phenomena, is subject to statistics, and America, in proportion to her age and population, has had as many geniuses as any other nation. The mass of all literature of modern times is made up of writings below the first class. Readers no more than authors can or ought to be always at concert pitch. We like to climb a mountain now and then; but we live in the valleys. And in American literature there are many pleasant glades, with a certain distinctiveness of scenery, wherein we may wander harmlessly and even profitably. These native vales of ours are broadening as we advance, and assuming a richer as well as a more characteristic aspect. They remind us less of England, of the Rhine, of the Campagna, or what not, and more of America — of something that we can never find abroad. Meanwhile, our mountains, after the fashion of high things, have always been individual. Seldom, in the world of letters, do we find such another heaven-scaling crag, with its feet in the deep sea, as Webster: nor so pure a summit, sublime with transcendental snows,

**The condition in America.**

as Emerson: nor anything to match that enchanted height, dim with fairy mists, and near and remote as the rainbow, that is Hawthorne. As for Franklin, he is a sort of table-land, a continent above a continent; perambulating which we do not realize our elevation, till we come to the brink.

The fact nevertheless remains that modesty best befits our present literary predicament. The potential is not the actual; the acorn, though it be the source of the oak, is but an acorn; and, because our literature looks healthy in embryo, we are not to speak of it as if it were anything more than embryonic. We have accomplished less in literature than in any other branch of human effort. A shipwrecked mariner, cast upon a desert island, and obliged to wring his subsistence from the hand of savage nature, does not begin by writing an epic, a novel or even a philosophic history. These things will be written about him, a thousand years hence, by his posterity. The intellect which, among us, now chooses its field of work with so much success in commerce, in manufacture, in science or in politics, — things immediately essential to the development of our country and people, — might, under settled and mature conditions, have achieved corresponding triumphs in literature. And the day for such achievements will doubtless come; but we will not seek to anticipate it, for eminence in letters seldom comes to a nation until its eminence in other respects has begun to decline.

**Material development first.**

Literature as one of the fine arts is less than a century old with us; for although much that Franklin wrote has in it that quality of modernness that is one of the surest literary tests, yet his aim was always practical or didactic. Irving was almost the first of our writers to cultivate literature for its own sake. The productions of our colonial period can be called literature by courtesy only. They consist of historical and geographical memoranda, and of theological essays and arguments. The Revolutionary era is rich in speeches, protocols and declarations, often elevated in sentiment and massive in thought, but dyed in the passionate hues of patriotism and parti-

**Pure literature but a century old.**

sanship, and necessarily lacking the repose and balance that belong to pure literature. The voice of Charles Brockden Brown was as that of one crying in the wilderness; his lungs were strong, and his will good, but his tones were unmodulated, broken and discordant. Irving was the first to discover a native vein, and in his Knickerbocker and Catskill legends he worked it to admirable effect. Cooper chose the Indians, and the sea in war; Herman Melville, with an unsurpassed fascination of manner, told of sea life in peace. Then Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes and the rest ushered in the present generation. **The outline.**

Up to this point, the divisions of periods, schools, styles or phases are practically the same in all manuals and histories of literature. It is with the contemporary and all but contemporary writers that divergences of classification begin. A great deal has been said on this subject, and with sufficient emphasis. However comparatively moderate may be the value of American literature, there is no doubt that it has been immoderately gossiped about. Sidney Smith began it with his famous interrogation, and the din of criticism and defence has been growing ever since. We have heard sweeping condemnations, often unjust; we have given ear to vociferous eulogies, generally foolish. "Schools" have been detected, where none existed; geniuses have been proclaimed, where there were only ingenious echoes or showy charlatans: "tendencies" have been discovered, which ended in a *cul-de-sac:* there has been here and there a bit of log-rolling, and now and then a note of spite or jealousy. Meanwhile, the supply of writers has been constantly augmenting—though of persons who ought to write the number is now, as it ever has been and probably always will be, very small. But the genuine voice is not certain to be the most widely heard, at first; and the very elect among literary detectives may sometimes be deceived by specious counterfeit. Time is needed to develop a true perspective, and to starve out the fat impostors. Contemporary judgments are sure to involve some errors; the best course seems to be, first to adopt a sound but not too rigid method of **The method of grouping.**

grouping; and secondly, to pick out such illustrative figures as shall, upon impartial consideration, appear most nearly representative and graphic. The plan is readily formulated; but rightly and conscientiously to carry it out is not easy.

Literary groups are likely to be engendered, not by the personal idiosyncrasies of any single writer, however eminent, but by the features and conditions of the land and period in which the writing is done. We might expect to find, for example, a Civil-War group. As a matter of fact, though war histories have been abundant, war novels have been few, and war poetry not important. But the histories, useful as material, are scarcely literature; no history of the war has appeared that is final or philosophic. The novels may come later, when time has merged the memory of the struggle in a richer atmosphere, and has healed its wounds. Again, we may look for a class of minds who will find a congenial literary topic in the negro — his humorous, pathetic, dialectal, religious and political phases. And, in truth, this field has been ardently and even fanatically worked; it might with advantage be allowed to lie fallow for a season or two. Once more, men like Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller will find their inspiration in frontier scenes and episodes; others, like James, will apply to society themes the stimulus of international comparisons; others will seek inspiration among politicians, social reformers, and labor-agitators; and still others, in company with Mr. Howells, will strive by patient dissection and refined comment to give value to the commonplace and the vulgar. To counterbalance these, there will be a group whose choice of a subject is conditioned mainly by its imaginative or dramatic promise; and another who rejoice in subjective, introspective, esoteric and transcendental studies. Then there will always be the sad-eyed army of humorists; and the poets and the naturalists — the Thoreaus and Burroughses, who ensconce themselves under Nature's wing, and divide their time between extolling her, and criticising civilization. In short, each aspect of national activity and circumstance will attract its special knot of investigators and devotees, and each newly hatched author will betake himself to the one or the other, as his innate sympathies dictate.

A classification upon this principle seems natural, and has other manifest advantages. The principle is of permanent application: as long as the national feature exists, there will the writers be gathered together. It is a principle which will become more comprehensive the longer it is applied; for the tendency of all human activity is towards special lines of work; and writers will be impelled to devote themselves to such, not only by natural preference, but by condign necessity; competition is already so great that nothing short of special fitness can secure employment. It is a principle, therefore, in accord with the law of evolution, which is not the case with such artificial classifications as that which specifies a "Realistic School," a "Concord School," and so forth. There will always be writers, no doubt, who produce work in more fields than one; but even they will survive in their best work only, and that will easily be assigned to its proper place. And again, there will be isolated individuals who have no obvious affiliations, the beauty of whose genius is its own excuse for being. They may safely be left to themselves; there will never be so many of them as to create confusion.

**A natural classification as opposed to an artificial one.**

Having adopted our classification, the next step, as we have said, is to concentrate attention upon those writers in each group who embody in the fullest degree its proper characteristics. The others may be no less meritorious from the point of view of literary workmanship; but in an elementary text-book such as this, where, out of a hundred names, but one can be mentioned, that one must be, first of all, characteristic: study of him must be study of the general traits of his group. The strictest and most systematic process of exclusion is indispensable to a clear conception of the quality and drift of our contemporary literature. To attempt anything approaching a large familiarity with it, would be worse than futile. The value of the whole body of American literature is (as we have already intimated) but moderate: and although every school pupil in this country should know something — and know it accurately and systematically — about our representative writers and their books;

**The plan with each group.**

and though they should give the subject an examination fuller than foreign schools would demand, — yet the sense of proportion must not be lost. Our writers have contributed but a fraction to the world's sources of culture; and if we would avoid the crippling of provincialism, we must not only concede this fact theoretically, but practically act upon it.

Let the student bear it in mind, then, that the surest way to enhance the prosperity of American literature in the future, is to submit it, now, to the severest tests. A high standard — the highest — is imperative. Boys and girls now at school will, a few years hence, furnish material for a new generation of American authors. Let them study this manual, not for the glorification of home products, but to realize, by learning what has been done, how much remains to do. The purest patriotism is the most exacting; let us prove our faith in the literature of this continent by refusing to be satisfied with less than perfection. Perfection can never be reached; but we can always climb towards it. Literatures, and manuals of literature, come and go; but all are of no avail unless the human mind, Divinely endowed, vindicates its birthright by aiming at a loftier and broader culture than the world has yet known.

**The test to be applied.**

# AMERICAN LITERATURE.

## I.

## COLONIAL LITERATURE.

As THE physical analysis of the Universe begins with protoplasm, so must intelligent study of a literature begin with examination of the inchoate material upon which the literature is based.

Literature in the higher sense is a criticism of life. But the Colonial days of America were days of action, not of thought about action. The men who crossed the sea in quest of civil and religious liberty, came not to write, but to do. Two subjects occupied them,—the Fear of God, and the Conduct of the Colony. Such things as they wrote either told the bald story of their daily life, or discussed religion, or mingled the two. They took up the pen only in the intervals of grasping the Bible, the sword, or the plough-handle. As literature, their productions are, in almost all instances, destitute of value. They are tedious, lifeless and repulsive. Yet, if you have imagination and human sympathy enough, you may detect in this protoplasmic rubbish the germs of qualities which, in their perfect development, made the genius of such men as Webster, Emerson and Hawthorne.

**The conditions and the character of the beginning.**

The first American writings are not only not literature; they were not even written by Americans. There were no American born people, except the Indians, in those days. American literature, then, begins with books written about America by foreigners.

**The source of our first books.**

Captain John Smith (1579–1631) was the first American annalist. He was a daring, restless, impetuous but shrewd man; of imagination too warm and vanity too inordinate to allow of his telling plain truth. He was more quick to magnify virtue in speech than to illustrate it by deed. But, considering how easily, in those times, he might have become a buccaneer and pirate, it is to his credit that he was content to remain an adventurer, a pioneer and a gasconading chronicler and pamphleteer.

**Character.**

Captain John Smith.

He wrote much: but his writings are of less value than, at the time, were his services in the Virginia Colony. Of the nine books treating more or less of America we give the full titles of the first two. It will be unnecessary for the student to read more of them than this: and the same may be said of nearly all the American books (so-called) of the seventeenth century. They are material for history, not for criticism.

"A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath happened in Virginia since the first planting of that Collony, which is now resident in the South part thereof, till the last return from thence. Written by Captaine Smith, Coronell of the said Collony, to a worshipfull friend of his in England. London, 1608."

The second title-page reads as follows: —

"A Map of Virginia. With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government, and Religion. Written by Captaine Smith, sometimes Governour of the Countrey. Whereunto is annexed the proceedings of those colonies, since their first departure from England, etc. by W. S. Oxford, 1612."

Smith's modern fame is due chiefly to the romantic tale of his connection with Pocahontas, the daughter of the Indian chief Powhatan. Whether or not his account of her rescue of him

be true, is not known. We shall, however, lose nothing by believing it. Smith himself told it so often that, whether really true or false, it doubtless seemed true to him. "It is true," he observes in one place, "in our greatest extremitie they shot me, slue three of my men, and by the folly of them that fled tooke me prisoner; yet God made Pocahontas the King's daughter the meanes to deliver me: and thereby taught me to know their trecheries to preserve the rest." Smith spent less than three years in America, including his visit to the Isles of Shoals on the New England coast; but he fell in love with the country, and always did what he could to advance its interests.

**The Pocahontas story.**

Other early Virginia annalists are George Percy, William Strachey (whose account of a storm that shipwrecked him is, by some, thought to have been in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote "The Tempest"), and John Hammond. In Maryland, George Alsop attempted a humorous descriptive work, part prose, part doggerel. In New York, Daniel Denton tried to stimulate immigration by declaring, in his "Brief Description," that "If there be any terrestrial Canaan, 'tis surely here!" Daniel Coxe of New Jersey, taking a broader point of view, advised the union of the English Colonies as a means of preventing Spanish and French supremacy. Gabriel Thomas of Pennsylvania, in his "Historical and Geographical Account," gives data to show that people squeezed by poverty in the Old World might find life easier in the New. And John Lawson (to make an end of this dry catalogue) found something to say about the country and inhabitants of North Carolina. All these writers belong to the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

**A number of minor writers.**

Meanwhile, in New England, the Puritan chroniclers were less fruitful. They had come to New England to get spiritual liberty, not material profit; to lay up treasure not on earth, but in heaven. Their bleak land had no allurements for ordinary emigrants, and the Puritans cared not to invite such. Moreover, they were too busy killing and converting Indians, fasting and worshipping, building and farming, to find time to write. They were not of a literary turn of mind.

**The situation in New England.**

Nevertheless, certain of them, perhaps, recognized the historical as well as the religious significance of their exile in the New World. William Bradford (1588–1657), a Yorkshire yeoman, sailed for Plymouth in his thirty-third year, and in the next year was made governor of the Colony. He was reëlected to that position some thirty times; his administration was both bold and wise, and he was an inveterate diarist. His "History of Plymouth Plantation," begun in 1631, was continued uninterruptedly down to 1646. It was a day-to-day chronicle, and is trustworthy and methodical. His nephew used his Ms. in compiling his New England History; Thomas Prince (1687–1758) drew from it materials for his "Universal History"; later, it found its way into the archives of the Old South Church in Boston, which was sacked by the British in 1776; and finally, in 1853, it was discovered in an English library, and was copied and published in this country. Bradford was a fairly good writer, and far more modest than Captain John Smith. "I shall endevor," he says, "to manifest [my subject] in a plane stile, with singular regard unto ye simple trueth in all things, at least as near as my slender judgement can attaine the same." And his "endevor" was successful.

**History of Plymouth Plantation.**

Edward Winslow (1595–1655), a fellow-passenger with Bradford on the *Mayflower*, kept a truthful and intelligent journal during the years 1620 and 1621, and was the author of three other works of a historical and historico-theological character. He acted as diplomatic agent for the Colony to England, and was thrice elected governor. He died of a fever in the West Indies in 1655, after a somewhat romantic and active life. Some of Winslow's descriptions show keen observation, as for example, this of the "Great Sagamore, Masasoit": "In his person he is a very lusty man, in his best years, an able body, grave of countenance, and spare of speech; in his attire little or nothing differing from the rest of his followers, only in a great chain of white bone beads about his neck; and at it, behind his neck, hangs a little bag of tobacco, which he drank, and gave us to drink. His face

**"Journal" and "Good News from New England."**

was painted with a sad, red-like murrey, and oiled both head and face, that he looked greasily."

The "History of New England from 1630 to 1649," by John Winthrop (1587–1649), first governor of Massachusetts, and, in 1643, president of the United Colonies of New England, is less readable than Bradford's record, but is rhetorically its superior. Winthrop was of a somewhat aristocratic temper, but firm and wise; a magnanimous and faithful man. He was accused of undue exercise of power; but he was vindicated from the charge, and his speech on that occasion (1645) is strong and able. He reminds the people that, by electing him to his office, they had invested him with a measure of Divine authority. Yet a magistrate is a man of like infirmities as other men. He covenants to govern according to God's law and man's, to the best of his skill. But if his skill prove inadequate, that is the electors' fault, not his. Only if the evil be in his will, can it be required of him. Liberty is of two kinds, natural and civil. "If you stand for some natural corrupt liberties, and will do what is good in your own eyes, you will not endure the least weight of authority . . . but if you will be satisfied to enjoy such civil and lawful liberties, such as Christ allows you, then will you quietly and cheerfully submit unto that authority which is set over you for your good. . . . So shall your liberties be preserved, in upholding the honor and power of authority amongst you." Sentiments like these have not yet become antiquated.

**Character of Winthrop.**

John Winthrop.

In 1637, one Thomas Morton, known to history as Morton of Merry Mount, published "The New England Canaan," a book written in antagonism to the Puritan sentiment, and in sympathy

with the Indian. Its statements are untrustworthy, and its animadversions boisterous and coarse. But Morton was a natural reaction against the harsh bigotry of the New England colonists, and his book is, from that point of view, as genuine as any of theirs. He is not to be confounded with Nathaniel Morton (1612–1685), a nephew of Governor Bradford's wife, and secretary of Plymouth Colony, whose "New England's Memorial" was, as has been already stated, based upon Bradford's journal.

Of all the diarists of this epoch, Judge Samuel Sewall was the most diligent and the least tedious. He has been nicknamed the Puritan Pepys, which is to praise him too much; though, it must be remembered, Boston under the Puritans was a less inviting subject than London under the Restoration. Born in 1662 and dying in 1730, he kept his daily record for no less than fifty-six years. It portrays, by a continuous series of small touches, a complete picture of the New England of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Sewall was a personage of weight and credit in the community; he was thrice married, and his personal character and habits, as they develop before us in the pages of the journal, are attractive and respectable. He wrote other books, but nothing else of permanent value. It is perhaps the only book of the Colonial period that can be read through with pleasure.

**A readable book.**

Next to themselves, the Indians were an object of attention to the colonists. Determined efforts were made to convert and civilize them, or, failing that, to kill them. The efforts in the latter direction were the more successful. But such men as Alexander Whitaker "did voluntarily leave their warm nests" in England and go forth to preach the Gospel to the savages. Whitaker, in his "Good News from Virginia" (1613), uttered an urgent call for help from his fellow-clergymen in the mother country; and he lived to be called the Apostle of Virginia. Daniel Gookin, superintendent for thirty years of the Massachusetts Indians, incurred obloquy by defending some of them during King Philip's War. He wrote two books about them, though they were not published till two centuries

**The Indian in our early literature.**

afterwards. Captain John Mason and Colonel Benjamin Church, Indian fighters both, described their adventures in writing; and Mary Rowlandson and John Williams told the stories of their captivities among the heathen.

But the noblest and most eminent friend of the Indian was John Eliot, the Apostle Eliot (1604–1690). He translated the entire Bible into the Algonkin language. "I have sometimes doubted," remarks Nathaniel Hawthorne, "whether there was more than a single man among our forefathers who realized that an Indian possesses a mind, and a heart, and an immortal soul. That single man was John Eliot. . . . Eliot was full of love for them, and therefore so full of faith and hope that he spent the labor of a lifetime in their behalf. . . . To learn a language utterly unlike all other tongues — a language which hitherto had never been learned, except by the Indians themselves from their mothers' lips — a language never written, and the strange words of which seemed inexpressible by letters — first to learn this new variety of speech, and then to translate the Bible into it, and to do it so carefully that not one idea throughout the holy book should be changed — this was what the Apostle Eliot did. . . . There is no impiety in believing that, when his long life was over, the apostle of the Indians was welcomed to the celestial abodes by the prophets of ancient days and by those earliest apostles and evangelists who had drawn their inspiration from the immediate presence of the Saviour. They first had preached truth and salvation to the world. And Eliot, separated from them by many centuries, yet full of the same spirit, had borne the like message to the new world of the west. Since the first days of Christianity there has been no man more worthy to be numbered in the brotherhood of the apostles than Eliot." It seems "a grievous thing that he should have toiled so hard to translate the Bible, and now the language and the people are gone. The Indian Bible itself is almost the only relic of both." But "if ever you should doubt that man is capable of disinterested zeal for his brother's good, then remember how the Apostle Eliot toiled. And if you should feel your own self-interest

**Nathaniel Hawthorne's opinion of Apostle Eliot.**

pressing too closely upon your heart, then think of Eliot's Indian Bible. It is good for the world that such a man has lived, and left this emblem of his life."

It is needless to mention any more of the early chroniclers; they may well be left to rest in their obscurity. Yet we may recall the name of William Stith of Virginia (1689–1755), third president of William and Mary College, a minister, and author of a "History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia." Jefferson (quoted by Professor Richardson) concedes him classical learning, but says he has "no taste in style. He is inelegant, therefore, and his details often too minute to be tolerable, even to a native of the country whose history he writes. . . . His success," adds Professor Richardson kindly, "was not commanding, but it was respectable."

As the consciousness of their peculiar historical attitude led to a multiplication of diaries among the colonists, so the conviction that they were, in a special manner, under the care and guidance of God prompted to the making of a quantity of theological writing. The Puritans were governed in both secular and sacred affairs by a numerous, intelligent, and masterful clergy, who rejoiced in religious polemics. But the learning, zeal and force displayed by these controversialists have not saved what they wrote from becoming obsolete. Nothing is of more evanescent interest than theological disputes. We of this age may be proud to inherit the independent spirit of our Puritan ancestors, but it is the working in us of that very spirit that has enabled us to outgrow their bigotry. Let us, however, glance at a few of the less intolerable volumes bequeathed to us by these venerable divines.

**The theological writers.**

A graduate of the English Cambridge, and for three years an incumbent of Cambridge in Massachusetts, Thomas Hooker (1586–1647) finally founded, and settled in, Hartford, and ruled his flock there with a benevolent tyranny. Twenty-three theological and religious treatises are the fruit of his dispensation of fourteen years, during which his iron lungs pleaded with the Lord on behalf

**Hooker begins the list with twenty-three.**

of his congregation. His voice is hushed long since, and his treatises forgotten; but he did his best, and was useful in his generation.

A better-known Boanerges was John Cotton (1585–1652), who, having been driven from Boston, England, by Archbishop Laud, received the compliment of having the town of Trimountain in Massachusetts re-christened Boston in his honor. In politics, as well as in theology, he was a power: he was a sturdy and indomitable champion of God and New England; but the written relics of him that have come down to us are drier and more barren than his own mortal dust. Out of the twoscore works that he produced, only a few pages in the "New England Primer" have survived oblivion, and the Primer, rather than the pages, are to thank for even this immortality.

**Then Cotton with twoscore.**

Thomas Shepard and Urian Oakes were smaller copies of Cotton. The first is remembered because Jonathan Edwards quoted from him, and the other is credited by Professor Tyler with "the most brilliant examples of originality, breadth and force of thought, set aglow by flame of passion, to be met with in our sermon literature from the settlement down to the Revolution." This is not saying much, but it is perhaps saying too much. The true pendant to Cotton was his great opponent, Roger Williams (1606–1683).

Williams was a sincere and sensible apostle of a religious liberty wider than the Puritans were ready to concede. In the heat of the conflict between them and him, both sides no doubt said and did more than Christian charity could warrant; but Williams had in him the spirit of the future, and that future has rewarded him: he fought our fight as well as his own. In stating the truth, and stating it without regard to the consequences to himself, no one has surpassed Roger Williams. Concerning his two works, "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution," and "The Bloody Tenet yet more Bloody," little in the way of literary eulogy can be said. They were abler than the pamphlets of his antagonists, Cotton and Fox. These forefathers of ours were bitterly in earnest, and were thus apt to attach too much weight to matters relatively unimportant.

**An apostle of true religious liberty.**

The Mather dynasty was the most noticeable clerical phenomenon of early New England. Richard Mather, the founder of the line, and Samuel Mather, its latest scion, need be mentioned only; but Increase Mather and his son Cotton were men of larger calibre. Increase (1639–1723) was for sixty years pastor of North Church, Boston; during sixteen years he filled the office of president of Harvard; and the new charter that he obtained for Massachusetts made him the Warwick behind the gubernatorial chair. He was learned, sober, and accurate; and curiously bound up in his massive character was a taste for the supernatural, which found literary expression in the only noticeable work of his that has reached our day, "An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences." It is a bundle of strange coincidences, escapes, punishments and ghost-stories, each bearing an obtrusive moral. The book served as a sort of introduction to the Salem witchcraft delusion, which ran its course a few years later. Its modern after-type, without the morals, is the "Phantasms of the Living," recently published by the English Society for Psychical Research.

**Increase Mather: ninety-two titles in his list.**

Cotton Mather.

Few men have striven harder than Cotton Mather (1663–1728) to prove themselves worthy of a formidable ancestry; and to add to his inherited responsibilities, his maternal grandfather was John Cotton. But he was more than a match for his burdens. He published over three hundred and eighty books; Latin was to him as his native tongue; he, like Bacon, took all knowledge to be his province; he preached three and forty years; he persecuted the witches; he could be theological in half-a-dozen languages, chiefly

**Cotton Mather with three hundred eighty-three books.**

dead ones; he managed, patronized and dominated everybody; and he was the author of "Magnalia." This indescribable book, the most widely read publication of its day, is a heterogeneous and polyglot compilation of information useful and useless, of unbridled pedantry, of religious adjurations, biographical anecdotes, political maxims and theories of education. It was almost as interminable as it was complicated. The author's aim in writing it seemed to be to exhaust every topic familiar or unfamiliar to mankind. Indeed, it contains everything except order, accuracy, sobriety, proportion, development and upshot. Professor Richardson, in his "American Literature," quotes a whole page from it. We will quote one passage from his quotation. The subject is Harvard College: "Lest all the Hellebore of New England (a countrey abounding with Hellebore) should not suffice to restore such dreamers unto their wits, it hath produced an university also, for their better information, their utter confutation. Behold, an American University, presenting herself, with her sons before her European mothers for their blessing. An university which hath been to these plantations, as Livy saith of Greece, Sal Gentium; an university, which may make her boast unto the circumjacent regions, like that of the orator on the behalf of the English Cambridge." Here follow six lines of Latin and a sentence of Greek; but Mather's own English is the most formidable of the three.

Samuel Willard, James Blair and John Wise were contemporaries of Cotton Mather; but their achievements are not sufficient to detain us here, though Professor Tyler gives enthusiastic praise to Wise's "Vindication of the Government of the New England Churches." The really important figure of the first half of the eighteenth century was Jonathan Edwards (1703–1757). He was a Yale graduate, and he devoted his literary career to the application of philosophy to religion. He was precociously learned, and lived an ardently studious and retired life; he was a Calvinist; indeed, he was more Calvinistic than Calvin. The spiritual courage with which he developed Calvin's theory is only surpassed by the masterly and (as many still think) the incontrovertible logic

**Our great metaphysician.**

that he brought to its support. His "Freedom of the Will" is a book still abreast of modern thought, though by no means in accord with prevailing modern convictions. While maintaining that the will is not self-determined, he asserts that man is responsible for his own evil; and that since choice must precede a free act of will, therefore the freedom chosen is limited by the choosing. The dialectical subtlety of his arguments is inimitable, and his language is admirably succinct and lucid. "If the will," he says, "determines the will, then choice orders and determines the choice; and acts of choice are subject to the decision, and follow the conduct, of other acts of choice. And, therefore, if the will determines all its own free acts, then every free act of choice is determined by a preceding act of choice, choosing that act. And if that preceding act of the will or choice be also a free act, then, by these principles, in this act too, the will is self-determined: that is, this, in like manner, is an act that the soul voluntarily chooses; or, which is the same thing, it is an act determined still by a preceding act of the will, choosing that. And the like may again be observed of the last-mentioned act, which brings us directly to a contradiction; for it supposes an act of the will preceding the first act in the whole train, directing and determining the rest; or a free act of the will before the first free act of the will." This is the Gordian knot of metaphysics; not to be untied, but to be severed by the downright blow of common-sense.

Rhymes and verses are not uncommon in colonial literature; true poetry is rare indeed. The wife of Governor Bradstreet was our first poet, — a Pattern and Patron of Virtue, as John Norton styles her in his funeral elegy. So she doubtless was; but her epics and her minor verses are nevertheless but metrical prose; and her opinions on the universe and its phenomena are not rendered more attractive by rhymes. Michael Wigglesworth (1631–1705) was the proper Laureate of Puritanism; his "Day of Doom" expresses the merciless bigotry of the sect, and describes with bloodthirsty zest the terrors of the Last Judgment. "It will continue to be

**Our first professional poet, 1612–1672.**

read till the Day of Doom itself," declared Cotton Mather, looking up, for a moment, from his "Magnalia"; but the day of its own doom passed long ago.

Nicholas Noyes was a spinner of punning doggerel and of complimentary verses. In 1765, "Juvenile Poems on Various Subjects" was published in Philadelphia; and in the same volume was "The Prince of Parthia," a tragedy, not devoid of literary and dramatic merit. The author was Thomas Godfrey, a Philadelphian; and with his death, at the age of twenty-seven, in 1763, ends (with one great exception) the record of pre-Revolutionary literature. That exception is Benjamin Franklin.

## II.

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

A FAMILIAR effect of striking events is to distort historical perception. Thanks to the national transfiguration wrought by the American Revolution, our Colonial period seems more remote from us than it really is. It is a measure of the greatness of Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) that he bridges the gulf between the Colonies of the eighteenth century and the United States of the nineteenth. Though he was the characteristic figure of his age, we of to-day find him as "modern" as ourselves. Inasmuch as he embodied the leading traits of his contemporaries, he was their representative; but he possessed, in addition, other qualities, which make him one of the men of all time.

**His position.**

Franklin's character contained the causes that brought about the Revolution, and the forces that made it successful. The colonists found in him the fulness of powers and tendencies that were as yet only germinating in themselves. He served as the explanation of stirrings and impulses which they could feel, but not understand. Looking back, from our vantage-ground, upon the colonial situation of the middle of the eighteenth century, we easily perceive that their drift was towards independence. But all they were sure of was that they were discontented. To few minds of the pre-Revolutionary epoch did the vision of political emancipation unfold itself; and it is doubtful whether, but for Franklin, they would have believed their own ears or trusted their own fate, when Destiny struck the hour. Seeing Franklin undaunted, however, they took courage; the cheerful confidence with which he contemplated the plunge into the untried abyss, allayed their misgivings. The key-note once struck, to chime in was easy. Yet, had not the Revolution (as a

**A leader of the Revolution.**

step onward in human freedom and progress) been, as it were, latent in Franklin from the first, its issue might well have been different.

His countrymen made all manner of drafts upon his intelligence, experience, manhood and patriotism; and he promptly honored them all. He answered all appeals with answers of the pithiest and most practical stamp. His attitude towards his fellows was like that of a benevolent pedagogue to his pupils. He told them what was best to do; he would, if they desired it, take off his coat and do it for them himself. If they disbelieved or disobeyed him, he smiled with humorous compassion, foreseeing the rod that fate had in pickle for them. But he contrived often so to veil his advice as to make it seem the promptings of their own intelligence, — recognizing the truth afterwards formulated by Emerson, that the way to lead men is to show yourself more clearly of their own opinion than they themselves are. He was too wise to expect political gratitude, and too independent to care for it.

Benjamin Franklin.

The great man of a crisis knows what to do, and does it. Where others are bewildered, he is at home; he seems to have been through it all before. He is like a being of a superior sphere, sent for his sins to spend a season on this earth; he yields his feebler companions such aid as they require, but with the air of the elder brother helping baby, — he will return to his own higher affairs presently. Not only is he equal to whatever emergency, but no demand seriously taxes his powers; were it necessary, he could do ten times as much. Only by his death does he confess his human limitations; and so broad and vigorous is his life, it seems cut prematurely short even when

**A man of resources.**

(as in Franklin's case) his years have considerably exceeded threescore and ten. For Franklin was one of those who are larger than their environment. He bore vast burdens smilingly and lightly, and achieved great things without, as the phrase is, half trying. The more we investigate him, the more multifarious and indefatigable appear his activities. There was no part of nature, or of human nature, that he did not touch.

Goethe, who was born forty-three years after Franklin, and lived to nearly as great an age, has been called "the many-sided." The title no less aptly fits Franklin. Between him — the self-made, self-educated, practical man — and Goethe, the poet, to whom fortune gave all things, an interesting parallel might be drawn. It is to our immediate purpose only to remark that Goethe studied and wrote, but (in the active sense) did nothing; whereas Franklin's career was all action; what he wrote being merely incidental and ancillary to his activity. Goethe's fame and ambition were literary; Franklin had no ambition whatever, beyond satisfying his own curiosity and conscience. Literary distinction, at all events, was so far from being among his cravings that he never signed his own name to anything written for publication. For all he cared, the world might to this day be ignorant that he ever wrote a line.

**No literary ambition.**

Nevertheless, Franklin had rare literary gifts. He could so marry words to things as to make them seem one; he expressed positive thoughts and emotions, without ornament or amplification; his style was the true reflection of his intellectual and moral stature. He was, it is true, the first American to cultivate the art of literary phrasing; but this was an instinct of his temperament, which loved pith, point, clearness and homely symbolism. Where one man would observe that "It is best to make good use of another's folly," Franklin said, "Fools make feasts, and wise men eat them"; and again, instead of grinding out such a platitude as "Bad hours and ill company have ruined many fine young people," he drops the short, sharp hint, "The rotten apple spoils his companion." These are little things, but they mark the vast difference between

**His style.**

the thinking and the unthinking mind, — between the eye that can detect analogies in things outwardly diverse, and bind the universe together with cords of sympathy and understanding, and the eye that can see only isolated facts.

Humor was another of Franklin's literary gifts, and literary, in his case, because it was first personal. It was not the thin, smirking artifice which is regarded as humor by some of our contemporary writers, and which is as carefully studied as a new dialect or a recondite title; it was the native, ineradicable quality of the man, the natural armor of his strength, his worldly wisdom, his kindly human sympathy and his shrewd Yankee insight. Many a portentous predicament had he faced in his day, but he was never for a moment scared out of his humor. It forms the predominating flavor of his writings, which are almost always in earnest, but seldom quite solemn; the demure twinkle of the eye is there, though the hasty or the foolish miss it. It was sometimes a trifle broad for modern taste, but it is of itself enough to preserve his productions from oblivion.

**His humor.**

In perception of character and ability to portray it, he was singularly expert. When, in 1724, Franklin was sent to London by William Keith, on a fool's errand, Daniel Defoe was still alive; Henry Fielding was a young blood, a year Franklin's junior; Smollett was a baby four years old, and Sterne a schoolboy of ten. Addison had died four or five years before, but Dick Steele was still carousing and writing in the taverns of Fleet Street, and Dean Swift still lacked something of his sixtieth year. Samuel Johnson, a clumsy, obstinate, scrofulous youth of fifteen, was studying as best he could in Litchfield. It is easy to forecast what Franklin's career would have been had chance brought him in contact with the literary brotherhood of London at that period. He was only eighteen, and ready to turn his hand to anything. In genius he was at least the peer of any of the men above mentioned, and had he settled down to write novels, for instance, it is more than likely that his books would have been as good as "Tom Jones," "Humphrey Clinker" and "Tristram Shandy," and that the American colonists might

**What might have been.**

have claimed the honor of producing the greatest painter of human character since Shakespeare. But it so happened that the Boston boy, during his sojourn in the world's capital, never fell under the glance of eyes capable of recognizing his royal endowments. He returned to America after a year or two, to England's loss and our gain; for not only did the mother country thus let slip between her fingers the man Franklin, but along with him, the ownership of the western half of the world. If she had offered the unknown youth a sum of money equal to half the amount of her national debt, on condition of his never leaving her shores, she would have bought him ridiculously cheap. She knew him better later on.

Meanwhile, quite fortuitously, Franklin added several unforgetable figures to the populace of fiction. He created Silence Dogood, and Busybody, and Titan Pleiades, and Miss Polly Barker, and Richard Saunders, whose name has gone far, and who, so ably and consistently is he portrayed, is still by many taken to be Franklin himself. In truth, as a sensible critic has pointed out, this is a ludicrous misinterpretation of his large, bounteous, and benignant intelligence. "Poor Richard" is lodged in but a small corner of his mind. He is simply a delicious specimen of humorous characterization in literature; and "the groaning, droning way in which the good man delivers his bits of wisdom heightens their effect, as if he despairingly felt that his fellow-rustics would disregard them, and have their own experiences, insensible to the gasping, croaking voice that warns them in advance."

**An opinion from E. P. Whipple.**

But though Franklin is not to be identified with Poor Richard, nor with Father Abraham, nor with any of his numerous literary progeny, yet he stands behind them all; and his own portrait, painted with desultory and unconscious touches through all the heterogeneous pages of his works, is his best contribution to the world of letters. This element of personal temperament, entering, as it does, into all he wrote, brings all within the boundaries of literature, properly so called, no matter of how transient importance its nominal subject may be. His Autobiography is the most interesting of his works,

**The Autobiography.**

because it is the longest: it reveals hardly more of its author than his pamphlets, essays and prefaces do. Such as it is, it has been called the best autobiography in the language, and, as literature, equal to "Robinson Crusoe." Comparisons of this kind have little value.

Great though Franklin was, he cannot be classed among the very highest order of minds. He was destitute of the poetic genius, with all that this deficiency implies. To Goethe, poetry was everything; it was nothing to Franklin. Wanting that, he lacked the instinct of reverence; he was unspiritual; he was insensible to the sublime; grace and taste were not in him. Irreligious he was not, though he was as far as possible from sounding the depths of religious experience so familiar to his contemporary, Jonathan Edwards. He formulated a creed to the effect that there is a God, that men should help one another, and that evil will bring its penalties; and a code of moral rules, which is really the expression of the shape which his practical experience of vice had given to Franklin's character. Obviously, there were heights that he could never reach; but he did not disquiet himself, therefore. He had no yearnings after the unattainable. He estimated himself at his true value; yet, high though this estimate must inevitably have been, he was both ostensibly and actually one of the most modest of men. The reason doubtless was that, while recognizing his comparative superiority in knowledge and power over those with whom he came in contact, he realized none the less his own (and all other men's) absolute insignificance. Moreover, the complexities of his mind and character resulted, under the criticism of his austere self-culture, in a noble simplicity, with which any form of vanity was incompatible.

**He lacked the poetic genius that characterizes the highest type of minds.**

Few men have lived so full a life as he. Born the son of a poor candle-maker in Boston, after two years' schooling, and two more in his father's shop, where he read what books he could get hold of, he was bound apprentice at the age of twelve to his brother James, a printer; and by the time he was fifteen, he was writing the "Dogood Papers" in "The

**Biographical.**

New England Courant," modelling his style on that of Addison. A quarrel with his brother caused him to go to Philadelphia, and there (after the short trip to London already mentioned) he started a printing-office, established the "Pennsylvania Gazette," and finally, in 1732, began to issue "Poor Richard's Almanac." Ten years later his political life began: he wrote pamphlets and essays on the burning questions of the day; and by the time he was forty-two, he had founded the University of Pennsylvania, sold his printing-house and newspaper, acquired a comfortable competence, and become interested in the study of electricity. He had lived just half his life, and now his name began to be heard beyond the limits of his own country.

Politics, science and diplomacy, turn and turn about, occupied the rest of his career. He pleaded his country's cause abroad; fought the malcontents, persuaded the stupid and encouraged the faint-hearted at home; was insulted, slandered and idolized; wrote satires, protocols, addresses and catechisms; analyzed the lightning, invented the lightning-rod and the stove; and at length, on the outbreak of the Revolution, was sent as ambassador to France, whither his fame had preceded him. The value of his services to the struggling Colonies while in that position can never be estimated; his sagacity, his tact, his unswerving purpose and patriotism, the unstudied dignity and charm of his manners, were only less effective than the armies of Washington in bringing the war to a fortunate close.

In 1785, Congress reluctantly permitted him to return from France to the country he had done so much to create and preserve: he was then in his eightieth year. Europe followed him with farewells and compliments; America welcomed him with triumphs and celebrations. He was the "Friend of Man," the "Father of American Independence." He was made President of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. His name was already signed to four of the most important documents of the century, — the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance, the Treaty of Peace and the Constitution. He had been faithful and successful in all the duties of life. His essays, his apothegms and his Autobiography will never be effaced from the pages of Ameri-

can literature. In his inventiveness, thrift, common sense and practicality he started out as the primal Yankee. He was great in more ways — more many-sided in his greatness than any other American before or since his time. His character is still the prototype of our most solid virtues. Few men in their lifetime have been so honored as he; and the century that has elapsed since his death has but deepened and broadened the respect and affection inspired by the memory of Benjamin Franklin.

## III.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD.

THE American Revolution, so far as overt acts of war were concerned, began in 1775, and was over in 1783. But its direct effect upon American literature was not restricted to those seven years. Thoughtful men had been looking forward to some such event, and recording, in speech or writing, their views and speculations thereupon, long before it actually came to pass. And after peace had been declared with England, the patriotic soldiers and statesmen who had carried the country safely through its perils, still lived to mould and administer its government. We shall be within bounds, therefore, in specifying as the Revolutionary period of our literature the last thirty years of the eighteenth century.

**Character of the leaders of the American Revolution.**

The war itself afforded just cause for a high level of thought and utterance. Its leaders were uniformly men not personally or selfishly ambitious, but actuated by a sincerely disinterested passion to benefit their country, and to vindicate human rights. They were also men of education and enlightenment — not demagogues, nor adventurers. In these respects they contrast favorably with many of the prominent figures of the English and the French Revolutions. Such persons as Washington, Jefferson, Adams and Hamilton would have commanded honor and respect, even had there been no accidental causes forcing them to fame and glory. The trials of national adversity showed them adequate to the demands made upon them: nor did they cope less successfully with the yet more difficult problems that presented themselves after the outside perils were past. The motives which precipitated the Revolution were pure and lofty; and its results have been such as to command the homage of the world.

But stirring events are not necessarily synchronous with notable achievements in literature. The more strongly human energy is stimulated, in a given state of things, in one direction, the less are apt to be its activities in other directions. Accordingly, we find, during the period now under consideration, that very little pure literature was produced in America. There were more good speeches than good writings; and our knowledge of these speeches is derived mainly from fragmentary hearsay reports, the modern art of short-hand reporting not being at that time in operation. The writings, again, are for the most part strongly political; they are important for the ideas expressed rather than for the manner of the expression. They attracted, no doubt, wider attention than any previous American literary productions: but it was the attention, not of critics, but of statesmen and politicians. The department of *belles-lettres* received small cultivation, and what there was of it requires but the most passing mention. Notwithstanding, in short, the deep and world-wide political influence of our Revolution, the sum of its contribution to letters (with which, exclusively, we are here concerned) was, with few exceptions, undeserving of serious study. The time was to come, indeed, long decades after the smoke of the battle-field had cleared away, and the cannons' echoes ceased to reverberate, when the heroes and the events of our conflict for existence should receive fitting celebration in prose and rhyme. But, for the present, there were other and more urgent things to do: the student, the poet and the philosopher were merged in the statesman and the man of action.

**Not favorable to the writing of pure literature.**

1. BELLES-LETTRES. **Charles Brockden Brown** (1771–1810). Although, in point of time, Brown was the latest of the imaginative writers of this period, yet his merit entitles him (in accordance with the method we have adopted) to first mention. He was by birth a Philadelphia Quaker, of feeble physical constitution, and endowed with an introspective, impressionable and morbid habit of mind. He was a romancer by temperament and predilection;

but there were in those days no wealthy publishers nor patrons to remunerate and encourage his genius, and the hasty productions he was obliged to put forth did less than justice to his actual powers. Hampered as he was by ill-health, poverty, the small number of readers (the population of the whole Union was but five millions at the time of the publication of his first romance) and the dearth of literary companions and native models, the chief marvel is that Brown produced anything at all. Yet, in addition to a multiplicity of other literary work, he wrote in less than four years some half-dozen novels which are not yet forgotten, and which contain passages of power and imagination that not unworthily prefigure the masterpieces of Poe and Hawthorne. The best of these is perhaps "Wieland, or the Transformation," published in 1798; then followed rapidly "Ormond," "Edgar Huntly," "Arthur Mervyn," "Clara Howard" and "Jane Talbot." Horror, mystery and psychological analysis are the elements in which he loves to deal; his subjects are strongly conceived and ingeniously designed, but the execution is apt to be inadequate and crude, and there is often a lack of art in the management of the plot. Thus, in "Wieland," we have the father of the hero killed by some appalling and apparently supernatural agency, the mother destroyed by the shock of the bereavement, Wieland himself induced by signs and omens to strangle his wife and murder his children, and finally to commit suicide. The atmosphere of the book is full of awful mystery, enhanced by a solemn and lofty style. Yet, at the close, we discover that all these ghastly events have been brought about by no more dignified agency than ventriloquism. Such a turn is fatal from the artistic point of view; and "Wieland" is but a type, in this respect, of the other romances. Brown took more interest in his plots than in his characters. The latter are but the mouthpieces and puppets of events. The author's conceptions of human nature, its passions, powers and frailties, seem to have been gained by introspection rather than by objective study and insight. He speculated on the basis of himself, but he had small practical experience of the world.

**Unfavorable conditions for work.**

**Character of his work.**

His work, at its best, is consequently narrow in scope even when it is most impressive. At its worst, it tends to extravagance and bathos. But we must concede him intensity, originality and imagination, so combined as to entitle him to the name of genius.

Brown was precocious and industrious. In his early youth he planned three epics, kept a journal, wrote essays and studied foreign languages. After a season of reading law in his native city, he composed a dialogue on the rights of women called "Alcuin," and produced, besides his romances, a work on "General Geography," a number of political pamphlets, of which that on "The Cession of Louisiana" passed through two editions, and many minor poems, short tales, biographical essays and critiques. Furthermore, he published, edited and was the chief contributor to three periodicals: "The Monthly Magazine and American Review," 1799; "The Literary Magazine and American Register," 1803; and the "American Register," 1803–1806. Truly he was a man of letters, in the fullest sense of the phrase; and though consumption ended his career at the age of thirty-nine, he had his share of the labor of life.

**His literary industry and fertility.**

**Philip Freneau** (1752–1832) lived to more than twice the age of Brown, but, with the exception of one imaginative poem, "The Home of Night," wrote nothing of more than temporary value. But his political, humorous, and society verses were voluminous, and, in their way and for their time, telling and entertaining. His perceptions were quick, his feelings lively, he wrote rapidly and heedlessly; but now and then he struck a true note or expressed a memorable thought. He was French by descent, and had the versatility and sentiment of his race. Such men as Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, Franklin and Madison were among his friends, and helped to render him a conspicuous figure. Besides "The Home of Night," Freneau's best remembered poems are the "College Examination," "Eutaw Springs" and "The Indian Student." His "Lines to a Wild Honeysuckle" are quoted by one of his critics as an example of sincerity and delicacy.

**Francis Hopkinson** (1737–1791), by his "Battle of the Kegs," did much to put British pretensions in an odious and ridiculous light; and his son Joseph (1770–1842) was the author of the national ode "Hail Columbia," which, though devoid of literary value, has fully served its patriotic purpose.

**John Trumbull** (1750–1831) was another poet of many years and limited talent. He is chiefly known by his Hudibrastic poem, "McFingal," which appeared in fragments from 1775 to 1782. It was immensely popular in its day, running through thirty editions, and, as a satire on the Tories, may be considered one of the forces of the Revolutionary period. It "sent the rustic volunteers laughing into the ranks of Washington and Green," and is scarcely inferior in vigor and humor to "Hudibras" itself: indeed, many of its couplets are still quoted as from the older poem.

**Timothy Dwight** (1752–1817), a descendant of Jonathan Edwards, was the author of a poem in eleven books called "The Conquest of Canaan," which is correct and decorous in form, but destitute of poetic value. Dr. Dwight was president of Yale College, a Latin scholar, a theologian, and a patriot; but a poet he could not be. His "Greenfield Hill," a pastoral, is perhaps less dreary than his epic; his "America" and "The Triumph of Infidelity" are unknown.

**Joel Barlow** (1753–1812) is described as having raised mediocrity to colossal dimensions. His "The Columbiad," an interminable epic, is perhaps the most stupendous and unmitigated failure in the annals of literature; and it is almost as pretentious as it is worthless. But a mock-heroic production of his called "Hasty Pudding" was popular in its day, and has lately been reprinted.

**Royall Tyler** (1758–1826) was the author of the first American play ever acted in the United States — "The Contrast, a comedy," 1786. It had some merit, and contained, among its characters, the prototype of the now familiar stage Yankee.

**John Howard Payne** (1792–1852) wrote upwards of sixty plays, among them "Brutus," which is still remembered. But the author of "Home, sweet Home" can scarcely be said to belong to the literary period we are considering.

**William Dunlap** (1766–1839) was a voluminous dramatist, now deservedly forgotten.

2. MORAL AND THEOLOGICAL. **Thomas Paine** (1737–1809), as an exponent of religious views, had a position in his day somewhat similar to that of Robert Ingersoll with us. He made a determined and vigorous attack upon a faith of whose true character he was ignorant. He was devoid of Ingersoll's quick wit and poetic genius; but he had his rough and ready knowledge of human nature, his love of destruction, his hard common-sense, his spiritual color-blindness, and, perhaps, more than his earnestness. As in Ingersoll's case, too, the consternation which his attacks upon religion produced among clergymen and church members greatly increased his weight and importance as an "infidel." His "Age of Reason" is a shallow production, but it had its effect when it was written. Religion, it need hardly be said, sustained no permanent injury at Paine's hands; on the other hand, his country had reason to be grateful to him for his vigorous "Common-Sense" pamphlet, and his tracts on "The Crisis," all of which reached a vast circulation. It was he who said, "These are the times that try men's souls." In France he published a rejoinder to Burke's criticism of the French Revolutionists, called "The Rights of Man," an able and effective production, which secured him the ardent friendship of the French people. The style of his various writings is simple, sarcastic and powerful.

3. POLITICAL. **Thomas Jefferson** (1743–1826). After the close of the war, the need of a government strong enough to raise revenue and conduct business was severely felt. Each of the members of the confederacy of states had a government of its own, and the National Congress lacked power to control or harmonize them. A

**The Constitution supported by the "Federalist" papers.**

meeting of representatives of all the states was called, and, after three months' deliberation, the Constitution of the United States was drawn up. Its appearance divided the people into two parties, known as Federalists and Republicans. The former supported the Constitution; the latter opposed it, and advocated greater independence of individual states. Much discussion followed: arguments in favor of the Constitution were ably presented by a publication called "The Federalist," written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay. The Constitution was ultimately adopted.

Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson was the most eminent and influential man of the party from which the Democratic party of our day is descended. Of Scotch and Welsh extraction, Virginia was his native state. He acquired a broad and scholarly education, and had exceptional natural gifts. He had a cold, comprehensive intellect: his nature was self-contained, but persistent. His temper was equable, under the control of the will; in manner he was urbane, conciliatory, unpretentious, and yet dignified. There was much subtlety in his character; his diplomacy gained many ends that force could not have reached.

**His character.**

Jefferson was preëminently a writer. His speeches were not effective, nor was he strong in administration; but in the seclusion of his study or office, with a pen in his hand, his power and ability were unequalled. He was profoundly learned in the theory and practice of government; his writings and career show him to have been one of the broadest and most consistent democrats of any age. He wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the most famous work ever produced by an American writer. His influence is apparent in the moulding of the Constitution, and the versatility and persuasiveness of his genius are conspicuous in his

**A great figure in the formative period of the nation.**

correspondence. His letters, indeed, did much to form and furnish forth the party which, for fifty years, was dominant in the country; and to this day the party acknowledges no authority so great as his. Men of mental calibre equal to his were not to be found, even in that age of able and energetic patriots; and his countrymen, recognizing the need of a clear-headed, far-sighted pilot at the helm, twice in succession elected him to the highest office in their gift. Although his writings had no distinctively literary or artistic aim, but were put forth to meet and deal with each occasion as it came, their interest and value often outlasted the circumstances that elicited them; and many of them may still be studied with profit. His Autobiography is a lucid and temperate piece of work, less captivating and characteristic than Franklin's, but rich in succinct narrations and philosophical reflections. "I have sometimes asked myself," he says, "whether my country is the better for my having lived at all. I have been the instrument of doing the following things, but they would have been done as well by others; some of them perhaps a little better." He goes on to enumerate the Declaration of Independence, the Demolition of the Church Establishment, the Act putting an end to Entails, the Act prohibiting importation of Slaves, and the Act for apportioning Crimes and Punishments. These are important services; and in default of "some one who might have done them better," the American people are grateful to Jefferson for having done them so well.

**His own estimate of what he had accomplished.**

**John Adams** (1735–1826). The Puritan temperament was strongly emphasized in this son of Massachusetts, but its fearless and indomitable energy was in him addressed to politics instead of to religion. He could not be at ease either in the pulpit or at the bar; but the obvious dangers threatening his country drew him to its defence as inevitably as the magnet attracts iron. He scented the battle-field afar off, and was already arming himself, and shouting defiance at the foe, before most of his comrades had realized that any serious

**A fearless patriot.**

trouble was at hand. Adams's brain was capacious, his nature vehement, his temper impatient and irritable. He seems to have felt a stern joy in battle, and to have taken as much pleasure in sacrificing his personal safety and fortune for the sake of the public good, as other men might take in lining their wallets and exalting their horns. The methods and science of government also had a strong attraction for him; and he acted a vital part in the organization, conduct and advocacy of democratic institutions. The Revolutionary period bears throughout the deep stamp of his individuality; and his political insight often foretold events and prepared for emergencies. As a writer, he was copious, careful and weighty. His diary, kept from 1755 to 1785, contains the record of many important events, graphically described; and his private letters show a largeness of view and a force of expression that recall the style of the historian. He was a contributor to the newspapers of the time, and was the author of several essays or pamphlets on matters of public moment. English oppression had no foe more resolute and radical than he; and when, in after years, he was sent to London on a diplomatic mission, George the Third welcomed him with the courtesy of one who recognizes and respects a sturdy adversary. He was successful in his errand, though his character was wholly opposed to the shifts and disguises of diplomacy. The style of his writing is in the main forcibly argumentative, sometimes rising to impassioned heights of rhetoric. In general usefulness to his country and in the lofty purity of his conduct, John Adams may take his place beside Washington.

John Adams.

**His literary work.**

**Alexander Hamilton** (1757–1804) was born in the West Indies, and came to America at the age of fifteen. He early acquired

the habit of systematically writing out his thoughts; and during his school days he tried his hand at poetry, with no memorable result. In the midst of his collegiate course the war broke out; he joined the army and was taken on Washington's staff. He remained in the field long enough to show the possession of abundant personal courage, and fair military ability; but his destiny was to be a ruler, not a soldier. In the formative period that succeeded the defeat of the British forces, he took rank among the greatest of the statesmen who laid the foundations of our government. Our national banking system, and the protective tariff on manufactures, are policies of which he is the author. He was the advocate, and in many cases the originator, of the principles upon which the Republican party of our day is founded. As Secretary of the Treasury under Washington, he showed such wonderful constructive power as to win, years later, from Webster a passage of eulogy that has become famous. The faculties of his mind were as well balanced as they were capacious and powerful; he penetrated to the root of things, comprehended their mutual relations, and was fertile in expedients to turn them to the best advantage. No emergency found him at a loss, and his creative intellect brought victory out of disaster. The symmetry of his nature and the genuine modesty of his character veiled the extent and power of his resources; he sought not his own prosperity, but that of the measures in which he believed, and was careless though others got the credit of his success. Practical in his objects and clear in their expounding, he conquered opposition, partly by lucid and temperate reasoning, and partly by a magnetic force of intellectual passion. In his private intercourse he was courteous, gentle and winning; the superior of almost all, he desired to place all men on an equality with himself.

**A creative genius.**

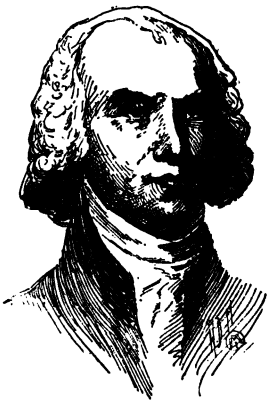
Alexander Hamilton.

His fame as a writer rests chiefly on his essays in the "Federalist," in support of the Constitution. His own plan was for a stronger, more centralized government than the proposed Constitution provided; but, the convention having made its choice, no one was more zealous or effective in urging its adoption by the states. In support of it his fifty-one "Federalist" papers were written; and the arguments brought forward for this purpose, are, perhaps, the most powerful and cogent the times produced, and have left little for subsequent times to add.

**His papers supporting the Constitution.**

In construing the provisions of the Constitution, Hamilton always leaned toward strengthening the federal power; and always opposed to him on this ground stood his great rival, Jefferson; and to these two men more than to others is due the greatness of the nation which Washington gave into their hands.

That Alexander Hamilton, in the fulness of his powers, should have fallen, practically murdered, at the hands of Aaron Burr — the most evil and detestable name that stains our early annals — is one of the tragedies of history.



James Madison.

**James Madison** (1751–1836) was one of the great Virginians of his epoch, — a graceful, somewhat undemonstrative, thoughtful figure, accused in his lifetime of personal selfishness and political timidity. He did such important service in shaping and defending the Constitution that he was called its "Father." He was an earnest and effective advocate of the cause of religious freedom. He was adroit and argumentative: his nature was colder than his intellect — the opposite of Jefferson's case. He was moderate, from inability to throw his whole heart into his work; he perceived more than he felt. The principle upon which the Southern States based their

**The Father of the Constitution.**

withdrawal from the Union in 1860 was first expressed by Madison in the "Resolution of '98," drafted by him, and passed by the Virginia Legislature, declaring that the Federal Constitution was a compact between sovereign states, and that in case of a violation of the compact each party to it had "an equal right to judge for itself, as well of infractions as of the mode and measure of redress."

Madison wrote twenty-nine of the "Federalist" papers, and upon them is founded his literary reputation. His style lacks imaginative charm; it is high-sounding and mechanical and sometimes deficient in clearness. But there is a grave and well-considered purpose apparent in many of his papers; and upon the audience he addressed they produced a weighty effect.

His "Federalist" papers.

**John Jay** (1745–1829). Webster's comment upon Chief-Justice Jay was, that "the spotless ermine of the judicial robe, when it fell on the shoulders of John Jay, touched nothing not as spotless as itself." Whipple remarks that "his integrity ran down into the very roots of his moral being, and honesty was with him a passion as well as a principle. A great publicist, as well as an incorruptible patriot, with pronounced opinions which exposed him to the shafts of faction, his most low-minded adversaries felt that his private and public character were unassailable." He gave steady and powerful support to the constitutional government, and negotiated the famous treaty with England which so excited the resentment of the Democratic party. He was the third and last of the eminent trio who contributed to the "Federalist," five of the essays in which are from his pen. Though his mind was not properly imaginative, the intensity of his sentiments sometimes gave to his compositions a quality of lofty imagery. In an appeal to the states of the Confederation, impelled by the depreciated state of the currency, and the injuries wrought thereby, he uses this language: "Humanity as well as justice makes this demand upon you. The complaints of ruined widows, and the cries of fatherless children, whose whole support has been placed in your hands and has melted away,

A great jurist.

have doubtless reached you; take care that they ascend no higher!" Such words are true literature, though written by one whose energies were directed in other than literary channels.

**Fisher Ames** (1758–1808), though known to us only as a political orator and newspaper writer, was one of the most poetical minds of his age. His language avoids sonorous and pretentious words, but is rich in tropes and metaphors, which stimulate the attention and aid the apprehension of the reader. The simple words are the result of studious self-control; the figurative expression is the native temperament of the man. The effect is of power well in the leash, and more impressive for the restraint. He was a passionate Democrat, and the New England Federalists regarded him as their champion advocate. His poetic susceptibility made him quick to read the hearts of his audience, and his natural eloquence enabled him to nobly formulate their deepest convictions. His comprehensive grasp of events and ideas empowered him to clothe in a memorable phrase a whole volume of political wisdom. But, with all his beauty and earnestness, he lacked the massive individuality, the overwhelming torrent of feeling, the towering strength that should be within the scope of the greatest statesman. His support of Federalism did not save it from decay, though it was destined to revive again in after years. His speeches have a despairing note in them, not the rejoicing assurance of the man conscious of strength greater than that of circumstance. His career had no lasting influence; yet he has a place in the history of our literature.

**A poetic style of oratory.**

**James Otis** (1725–1783) was a learned and affluent speaker, one of the vanguard of Massachusetts orators. His speech, in 1760, against the writs authorizing a search for dutiable goods, was a brilliant effort. Adams declared that it gave birth to the idea of American independence. Otis had the voice and the eye of eloquence, as well as the necessary mental qualifications, and he aroused enthusiasm wherever he

**"A Flame of Fire."**

appeared. His private character was marred by vanity and imperiousness, and he developed eccentricities which finally culminated in insanity. He can hardly be termed a writer, and we know his speeches by the effects they produce rather than in themselves. His pamphlet on the "Rights of the British Colonists" is probably his best literary production.

**Patrick Henry** (1736–1799). The fire and splendor of the South were in the utterances of this Virginian, whose awkward body and country training seem only to have enhanced the effect of his eloquence. His speeches had an extraordinary vividness, and no speaker of his day is so widely quoted in our time as Henry. He expressed honesty as well as passion, and strong practical ability lay behind his words. He prepared the minds of the people for the inevitableness of war, and was active in devising measures to meet it when it came.

**A Southern orator.**

**Samuel Adams** (1722–1803), cousin of John Adams, anticipated even the latter in his perception of the storm that was to burst over the Colonies. "He was," says Nathaniel Hawthorne, "a man of great note in all the doings that brought about the Revolution. His character was such, that it seemed as if one of the ancient Puritans had been sent back to earth to animate the people's hearts with the same abhorrence of tyranny that had distinguished the earliest settlers. He was as religious as they, as stern and inflexible, and as deeply imbued with democratic principles. He, better than any one else, may be taken as a representative of the people of New England, and of the spirit with which they engaged in the Revolutionary struggle. He was a poor man, and earned

**An ancient Puritan.**

Samuel Adams.

his bread by a humble occupation; but with his tongue and pen he made the king of England tremble on his throne." Samuel Adams had the distinction of being the only man excepted from the amnesty offered to the patriots by England in 1774. His writings were numerous, but have never been collected; they are to be found in rare pamphlets, and in the files of ancient newspapers. But the character of the man is in his words, as his words were the expression of his acts and convictions.

**Josiah Quincy** (1744–1775) died of consumption just as the war broke out, but the enthusiastic patriotism of his writings justify his high reputation among the youth of Massachusetts. "To hope for the protection of Heaven," he said, "without doing our duty, and exerting ourselves as becomes men, is to mock the Deity. However righteous our cause, we cannot, at this period of the world, expect a miraculous salvation. Heaven will undoubtedly assist us, if we act like men." These were right sentiments, and it was in obedience to such sentiments that Quincy's friend Warren fell at Bunker Hill.

**A man who appealed to men.**

## IV.

## PIONEER PERIOD.

### Irving, Cooper, Poe.

THE political writings and speeches which we have just considered form, in the aggregate, an important and unique body of literature. A new nation was coming to birth, not, like the other nations of history, insensibly and undesignedly, but at the deliberate summons of an abstract moral and political idea. The United States was the conscious incarnation of a lofty ideal; and the men who conceived and formulated this ideal, and, later, carried out in practical detail its various parts, were inspired even beyond their natural genius to explain, justify and advocate the steps of their achievement. Great emergencies arouse men's latent greatness; the need for heroism makes heroes. The stress of the Revolutionary period elicited from those who underwent it an assemblage of treatises on human rights and government never surpassed in breadth, depth and freshness, and for the intellectual equivalent of which we must go back to the days of Greece and Rome.

**Our country the incarnation of a lofty ideal.**

But with the first decade of the nineteenth century, the stress was relaxed, and it began to be possible to breathe some other atmosphere than that of war and politics. This was the moment, in the reaction from sterner preoccupations, for the budding forth of a new literature — a literature having its source not in the world of concrete facts and actual events, but in that of imagination and reflection; a literature, in short, which should exist as an end in itself, and not as a mere transcript of contemporary circumstances. And it was at this moment, accordingly, that the literature appeared.

**Literature's hour.**

As is apt to be the case at periods of renaissance, it was a vigor-

ous, an independent and an original literature. The writers who began to write, or who were born, at the beginning of the century, were our leading writers in quality as well as in time. They have with them the freshness and energy of the morning. They were the pioneers, and they inhaled inspiration with the virgin atmosphere. Unhampered by "schools," undaunted by predecessors and traditions, they dared to be themselves, and rejoiced in their strength. A new era in the development of man had commenced, and they were its prophets. Nothing produced by their successors has the same charm of spontaneity and novelty.

**The dawn.**

Following this renaissance came an era — that of Clay, Webster and Calhoun — when politics once more assumed a prominent place in the public eye. Slavery and State Rights were discussed, and the problems incident to the opening up of the Continent pressed for consideration. A subordinate departure of literature was in the direction of a multiform sentimentalism. Dealers in all manner of moral, social and political nostrums appeared; a storm of vague and futile theories obscured the air, and the American mind, distracted and, for the moment, emasculated, expressed itself in books which faithfully reflected its unhealthy and enfeebled tone. This lasted till the breaking out of the Civil War. The literature which has come into existence since then is too heterogeneous, both in form and quality, to be labelled in a few phrases; but its general characteristics are overfinish and conventionality, and the need of a new, unhackneyed inspiration is acutely felt. Let us now return to the Pioneers.

**Evolution of our literature.**

**Washington Irving** (1783-1859) was the first in the field; although, as we have seen, Charles Brockden Brown preceded him. But Brown never set his feet on solid earth; he hovered in a murky air of his own creation, and his romances had no real relation to the land or the time in which he lived. Irving possessed the rare and invaluable endowment of a thoroughly healthy nature: nothing bitter, morbid or sensational ever came from

him. He was a spontaneous optimist: he declined to look upon the gloomy and sinister side of life. His intellectual ship was not a vessel of deep draught; but her lines were graceful, her sails white, her movement lightsome, and she sailed on summer seas: and the hand upon her helm ever steered her towards the Happy Isles. Yet it must not be inferred that Irving's personal experience was all ease and sunshine. One deep grief he had — deep and lasting: one irksome and protracted annoyance: and his physical health, never very robust, was at the outset of his career so delicate as to threaten a fatal issue. But he met these misfortunes with undemonstrative but manly courage; nor was he spoiled or vulgarized by the brilliant success that greeted all his literary productions. On the contrary, it surprised and almost intimidated him; he could not believe that his work was so excellent as the public declared it to be. This, no doubt, was because the work was the genuine and unforced product of his temperament, which was normally literary; he could not gauge a quality so intimate to himself. Humor, ranging from playful to broad, was a prominent feature of his writings; and allied with it was a sincere and refined vein of pathos. His observation was accurate and graphic, his perception of character picturesque and sympathetic, his judgment sane and serene. His mind was creative, though not on a profound scale: he was wanting in the constructive faculty; and there were regions of human nature which he made no attempt to explore. But in his own gentle and charming sphere he was altogether admirable; and he proved his good sense by not trying to achieve what was beyond him. "My writings," he said, "may appear light and trifling in our country of philosophers and politicians; but if they possess merit in the class of literature to which they belong, it is all to which I aspire." His genius was that of the sketcher rather than the painter; but it was a true and virile genius, and it seldom went seriously astray. Indeed, almost the only fault really ascribable to Irving is an occasional thinness of touch, noticeable especially in his sentimental passages. But, however thin, his sentiment is not false nor sickly;

**His character.**

while his humorous passages, never far to seek, are full of body and brilliance.

Washington Irving owes his given name to the fact that he was born, in New York, some five or six months before General Washington entered the city on its evacuation by the British troops under Sir Guy Carleton. "Washington's work is ended: the child shall be named after him," said his mother. The boy, though delicate, overflowed with lively spirits, and was obliged to resort to stratagem to get the fun his nature clamored for. For his father was a Scotch Presbyterian, with the severity and rigidity of the old Covenanters in his domestic methods and notions. He acted upon the theory that anything entertaining must be wrong. Washington's mother, however, was an English woman of sweet and gentle character; and since he was the youngest of eleven children, he was indulged and protected by his elder brothers and sisters. His fragile constitution also contributed to his freedom. His schooling was desultory, and he never was a hard student. He rambled over Westchester County, made excursions up the Hudson and did substantially what he pleased. The most important result of his experience in the law-office of Jeremiah Ogden Hoffman was the acquaintance it brought about between him and Hoffman's daughter, with whom he fell in love, but who died of consumption before they could be married. This was Irving's great grief, and it may be said that he never wholly got over it. At all events, he remained all his life unmarried. On the other hand, he was all his life very susceptible to female influence, and his chivalrous devotion to women as women is one of his most agreeable traits. Nor were women less attracted to him. A more winning personage than the young Irving was not easily to be found. Of medium height and rounded figure, his finely shaped head was covered with wavy dark brown hair. A high, full forehead and delicate eyebrows overshadowed deep gray eyes, which sparkled with humor and softened with feeling. His nose was finely moulded, his mouth refined, his chin strong. An agreeably modulated voice and a delightful smile enhanced the graces of his person. His character

**His early life.**

**His manner and appearance.**

was the complement of his appearance. A woman who knew him well describes him as being thoroughly a gentleman, both in manner, and to the core of his heart. He was sweet-tempered, gentle, sensitive, gay and humorous; gifted with warm affections; bright, easy and abundant in conversation, and an invariably interesting companion. Indeed, Irving, though born to literature, was never in the least Bohemian. He belonged to the best, most cultivated society; and wherever he went, at home or abroad, the best society welcomed and caressed him.

At the age of twenty-one, after contributing a few satirical letters to a local newspaper over the signature of "Jonathan Old-style," Irving went abroad for his health, and made the "grand tour." He made the acquaintance of several notable people, and indulged his fondness for the stage by studying Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. Returning home, after two years, in 1806, he was admitted to the bar, only to neglect it for the follies of society with the congenial young men and women of the day. With the coöperation of his brother William and his friend Paulding, he brought out a semi-monthly periodical, "Salmagundi," which ran through twenty successful numbers, and attempted, as the prospectus put it, "simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age." The papers, in the Addisonian style, were witty and humorous, but the authors seem to have tired of them before the readers did, for they voluntarily discontinued the periodical. It was soon after this that the sad issue of Irving's love affair took place; but, in order to relieve the sorrow that weighed upon him, he kept at work upon an enterprise that he and his brother Peter had begun a little while before. This was a burlesque or comic history of the early settlement of New York, and was entitled "A History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker."

**His first literary ventures.**

The book was published in 1809, and was immediately successful. It had been heralded by paragraphs in the papers referring to its supposititious author, couched in a tone so serious as to mislead many. In fact, a first hasty glance through the pages seems to have given some persons the impression that it was the

*bona fide* history that it pretended to be; but the satire, as a rule, was at once perceived, and enjoyed with an intensity of appreciation never before aroused by an American book, and dissented from only by a few old persons of both sexes and of Dutch descent, who were enraged and scandalized at sport made of their revered ancestors. The first effect of the book was to excite irresistible merriment; but, as time went on, more critical judgment found it rich in literary merits which had been obscured — or, rather, dazzled out of sight — by the broad and rollicking humorousness of the conception and execution. The book is, indeed, a real masterpiece of humor; and though Rabelais and Swift might claim it as their literary posterity, it is substantially an original book, which might have been written differently if Rabelais and Swift had never existed, but would probably have been little less bright or amusing in any event. It is a book written with evident enjoyment and freedom; it is broad in conception and as solid in execution as a genuine historical work, and the whimsical charm of its style and characterizations has given it a lasting place in the affections of readers. Abroad, it was appreciated only less highly than at home. Sir Walter Scott read it aloud to his family, laughing heartily over it. During the next few years it passed through several editions, and every new generation brings it fresh readers.

**A masterpiece of humor.**

The fame and favor thus brought to Irving (who wrote all of the book except the five opening chapters, which were the joint production of his brother and himself) failed to induce him to adopt a literary career. He seems to have regarded his book as a *jeu d'esprit*, not likely to open up a career. He went into the hardware business as partner with his brother, visited Washington in the interests of the concern and made the acquaintance of President Madison and his wife, and of society at the capital and in Baltimore. Irving was a Federalist, and had dabbled a little tentatively in politics, but he was never a strong partisan. To quote his own words, he was without gall, and distrusted the soundness of political counsels accompanied by attacks on any great class of the people. At this period he confessed to restlessness and dissatisfaction. He craved

**Dabbles in politics.**

some absorbing preoccupation. "Protect me from these calms!" he exclaimed. Society lost its savor for him. He wrote for "The Analectic Magazine" for a while; but at the outbreak of the War of 1812 he resolved to take up arms, and was appointed aide on General Tompkins's staff with the rank of colonel. The war ended before he found an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and he soon after sailed for Europe to look after the interests of Irving Brothers' business on that side of the Atlantic.

During the next three years he met all the literary celebrities of the Old World, and became no less of a favorite in England than he was at home. But in 1818 Irving Brothers failed, and this disaster opened to Washington the gates of prosperity and renown. With fine courage and determination he struck out on an independent literary career. Having once definitely addressed himself to this career, he allowed no temptations to turn him from it. He who had hitherto been the idle ornament of his family now became its stay and support. He refused remunerative offers of government employment at home, and editorships abroad, and settled down in London to creative literary work. In 1819 he published "The Sketch-Book," which comprised, among other pieces, the celebrated story of "Rip Van Winkle" — "a stroke of genius," as one of his best critics remarks, "that recreates the world, and clothes it with the hues of romance. It is one of the primal stories; a great picture painted by a great artist on a small canvas." After its success in America, the copyright of the volume was bought by the English publisher, John Murray, for $1000. Irving was at this time thirty-six years old.

**"The Sketch-Book."**

He continued to reside in England for five years, his next works being "Tales of a Traveller," in which are utilized the fruits of his European experiences, and which contains the well-known sketch of "The Stout Gentleman": and the volume called "Bracebridge Hall." "He wrote with facility and rapidity when the fit was on him, and produced great quantities of manuscript in a short time; but he often waited and worried through barren months for the movements of his fitful

**His work in England.**

genius." Irving himself regarded the "Tales" as more artistic than his previous works, but did not anticipate its popularity. It was quickly written, and has a charming ease and lightness of style, but the public began to demand from him something off the old lines. This demand may have suggested to him the group of writings that finds its theme and inspiration in Spanish subjects. The "Tales" appeared in 1824. In 1826 Irving went to Spain, and took up his residence in Madrid.

The three years that Irving spent in Spain resulted in the writing of four books, — the "Alhambra," the "Conquest of Granada," the "Legends of the Conquest of Spain" and "The Life of Columbus." The field which he thus opened was a virgin one; no books on Spanish subjects had till then been published in America, and Irving, in his search for materials, discovered numerous documents that had lain hidden among the Spanish archives for hundreds of years. The romantic and picturesque episodes of Spanish history, scenery and character were thoroughly in harmony with his genius, and his treatment of them was so charming and masterly that his books are still classics on those topics, and to remember Irving is to think of Spain. They are full of descriptions of noble landscapes and exquisite architecture, of feats of chivalry and strange adventures, of supernatural events and portents; and always by the way plays the sunshine of the author's humor, melting into the weird and beautiful scenes, and throwing a smiling gleam across the shadowy places. The "Life of Columbus" is, of course, a more serious and weighty work than the others, and Irving spared no pains to be historically accurate. The portrait of the discoverer is clearly drawn and richly colored, and is probably as near the truth as any conception derived from documents of a man of an earlier century can be. From his English publishers he received for the copyright of these works upwards of $30,000.

**His books on Spanish subjects.**

The appointment of Secretary of Legation at the Court of St. James brought Irving back to London in 1829, where he renewed his relations with his English friends, and received medals and degrees of honor from public institutions. In 1831 his longing to

return home impelled him to resign his appointment, and he landed in New York in May of the next year, after a seventeen years' absence. He was received and honored as one of the first citizens of the Republic, and having bought a farm at Tarrytown on the Hudson, not far from Sleepy Hollow, and named it "Sunnyside," he took up his abode there with the purpose of there ending his days.

**Returns home.**

And, in fact, the next ten years of his life were spent either at Sunnyside or in explorations of his own country. A journey in the West was the occasion of a descriptive volume, "A Tour on the Prairies." "Astoria" was written in compliance with the request of the Astor family; the "Recollections of Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey" embodied some English reminiscences; "Captain Bonneville" is another sketch of Western life; and "Wolfert's Roost" comprised magazine articles written at various times.

**At Sunnyside.**

In 1842, at the instance of Daniel Webster, Irving was appointed to the Spanish Ministry, and during his residence in Spain of four years he found little leisure to write. On his return, he set to work on his long-contemplated "Life of Washington," published in 1855 to 1859; and while producing it he turned off rapidly "Mahomet and his Successors" and "The Life of Goldsmith." He died on Nov. 28, 1859, at Sunnyside, and was buried on a little hill overlooking the Sleepy Hollow, which his genius had rendered as immortal as himself.

**Later works.**

Irving's literary touch lacks sharp precision; but his sympathetic handling causes his pictures to grow upon the reader, until at length the latter finds in the work all that its author felt and aimed to convey. His point of view was retrospective and tranquil, and was particularly grateful to a people who had just emerged from the grim realities of the Revolution. He saw life through the literary atmosphere, and had no theories to ventilate, no reforms to advocate, no specific moral to enforce. His style was individual, lucid and musical. The moral beauty, integrity and generosity of his character shine through his books. The fact of his giving up, in favor of Prescott,

**His literary style.**

the design, cherished for years, of writing the history of the conquest of Mexico — and never allowing Prescott to suspect the extent of his sacrifice — is a characteristic trait of a man truly lovable and widely loved. His books do good to all who read them, and are likely to outlast many works of far greater intellectual force and acumen: their union of taste, simplicity and repose gives them a hold upon our inmost and least variable sympathies.

**James Fenimore Cooper** (1789–1851). The massive, forcible and impetuous character of this man renders him one of the striking figures of his time; and it would not be easy to find a contrast greater than that between him and Irving. There are apparent contradictions in his career, in order to reconcile which we must consider carefully the circumstances of his birth and training, his temperament and his intellectual quality.

**A striking figure.**

James Fenimore Cooper.

His father was a judge, a member of Congress, and a man of means and energy. The year after James's birth, he moved from Burlington, N.J., to a large tract of land belonging to himself, near Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River. In 1790 this place was practically a wilderness: it was on the frontier of civilization. Judge Cooper laid out the streets of a town, and built himself a handsome house; but his house-lots remained for the most part unoccupied. James, therefore, — a healthy and high-spirited boy, — had the freedom of woods and fields, the companionship of trappers and Indians and the education to be derived from wild animals and observation of wild nature. He was both observant and imaginative; and these open-air experiences, coming at the

**His early life.**

most impressible period of his life, permanently affected him. Moreover, the War of the Revolution was but just over, and its events, together with views and speculations as to the future of the new Republic, were the staple of conversation. Young Cooper's patriotism was no doubt kept at a high temperature by tales of American hardships and triumphs on the battle-field; while the political discussions between Federalist and Republican opened to him vistas of meditation in economic and social philosophy. It was natural to him to take everything seriously, and his cast of thought was ponderous and intense, rather than mercurial. The mind housed in his large, strong, rather clumsy body partook of its characteristics; it could not turn or move swiftly, but its evolutions were deliberate and it fed much upon detail. If he permitted himself to be hurried beyond his usual gait, his demonstrations were apt to be violent, and his conclusions erroneous. His intellectual capacity was neither broad nor deep, but it clung with the more tenacity to the judgments it formed; and a certain heavy ingenuity and tireless energy enabled him to defend and drive home his opinions, to his own satisfaction, if not to that of his opponents. Withal, his nature was noble and magnanimous and of inalienable dignity; injustice and littleness aroused his unquenchable wrath, which, again, blinded him to the fact that he was not seldom led, by the fury of opposition and denunciation, into committing almost as much injustice as he denounced. His temper, indeed, was little less than ferocious when aroused; while the persistence and thoroughness of his character prompted him to fight out his quarrels to the bitter end. His consciousness of the genius which he undoubtedly possessed tempted him to fancy that he was qualified to lay down the law on all subjects in heaven and earth; whereas, in truth, his proper field and scope were very narrow. He comprehended neither men nor women in any profound sense; but he had an overmastering perception of certain broad qualities of human nature, and, in his best books, he described and embodied them most impressively. Some aspects of his character recall that of Walter

**His character.**

Savage Landor; but the product of his mind, both in quality and aim, was, of course, utterly different from that of the great Englishman, while of Landor's classical scholarship he was destitute almost of a trace.

**His education and experience.**

Not that Cooper's education was confined to the influences of nature and its denizens. He had the best schooling obtainable in that day and place, and entered Yale College in 1802, in his fourteenth year; and after three years' study, and some preliminary experience in a merchant vessel, joined the Navy, and served under the Stars and Stripes. This not only gave him knowledge and discipline, which were doubtless of no small value to him, but his salt-water experience was also destined to qualify him to be the foremost sea-novelist in the language. At twenty-one he left the navy and married; and then for nearly ten years he subsided into the gentleman farmer, with every prospect of remaining such to the end of his days.

**The occasion of his first book.**

The manner in which his career was opened to him was characteristic. He had been reading an English novel, and had found it dull, insomuch that, on laying it down, he was moved to declare that he could write a better story himself. Mrs. Cooper may have smiled in a manner which he interpreted as incredulous; at all events, by way of proving his words, he took pen and paper and produced one of the stupidest books ever written, and decorated it with the engaging title of "Precaution." Whether because he was conscious that this achievement scarcely made good his boast, or that, in the course of its evolution, he had stumbled upon the secret of his possibilities, certain it is that instead of laying down his pen, he set to work anew, and in "The Spy," a story of the Revolution, he conquered fame at a stroke. This was in 1821. Two years later came "The Pioneers," the first published of the "Leatherstocking" group; in 1824, "The Pilot," first and best of his sea-tales; and in 1826, "The Last of the Mohicans," by which time Cooper had become the leading, or rather the only, American novelist, and was known and admired not merely at home, but in England and, through translations, in most of the countries of the Continent.

In 1826 Cooper went to Europe, and remained there seven or eight years. The consequences of this journey were not fortunate; they brought out the less attractive side of his character. While in France he read in a newspaper a statement reflecting upon the government of the United States. He was moved to write a reply vigorously repelling the aspersion; rejoinders followed on both sides, and ere long the pugnacious American was deeply embroiled. On returning home in 1833, his ire was aroused afresh by certain hostile criticisms in native journals; instead of being supported by his own countrymen, he found them turned against him. The situation was one to have awakened his sense of humor, if he had had any; but, as usual, he took it in savage earnest, and employed himself for several years in proving the turpitude and worthlessness of the very people in whose behalf he had been breaking lances abroad. Not content with prosecuting actions at law, inditing newspaper articles and writing novels in support of his opinions and in scorn and ridicule of his opponents, he composed a romance embodying his views of the ideal social state. Thus, like a warrior at Donnybrook fair, he fought with impartial energy against all and sundry; and ended by shouting defiance to the world from the unsubstantial battlements of a castle in the air. The titles of these compositions need not be mentioned; none of them repay reading, and they are better forgotten. Happily they did not prevent Cooper from continuing to produce the great stories upon which his renown is based. In all, he wrote thirty-four works of fiction, beside histories, essays and treatises. Of these, not more than ten demand the notice of the student; and there are, even in those books, large tracts of verbiage that would better have been omitted. But there remains, after all deductions and criticisms have been made, enough good matter to constitute a high and enduring reputation.

**A European visit and its results.**

Cooper died on the 14th September, 1851, the eve of his sixty-second birthday. Those of his books that are read fall into two groups, — the sea-tales and the Leatherstocking series. They are written for the pure pleasure of creation; they are the fruit of

objective experience, enriched by genius and shaped by a masculine grandeur of motive into noble and dignified forms. Their plots are a succession of absorbing and exciting incidents, rendered in somewhat formal language, and with a deliberation of movement and a copiousness of detail which, while giving weight and substance to the final impression, are sometimes not far from the fault of tediousness. Yet this treatment is essential to the genius of the author, who cannot use his materials until he has, as it were, fingered every part of them. He differs from Scott (between whose romances and his own there are certain superficial points of resemblance) in two important respects: though Scott describes vividly and at sufficient length in his introductory passages, he never lingers over such matters when the heart of the story is up, but carries us onward with a speed in strict proportion to the interest of the situation. Again, Scott's dialogues are among his most masterly achievements: they not only advance the narrative, but they interpret the characters of the speakers, and they sound the whole gamut of emotion and humor. Cooper, on the contrary, never succeeds in making his people talk, or in detaching them from their background: their utterances have the form but not the quality of living conversation. Beyond assigning specific idioms to certain characters, such as Natty Bumppo and Long Tom Coffin, Cooper makes scarcely an attempt to induce his personages spontaneously to individualize themselves. In short, their speech so closely resembles the writing of the author that, save for the occasional orthographical and idiomatic solecisms above noted, they are indistinguishable therefrom. Cooper, in other words, is a describer and nothing else; but in description he is a master. He completes picture after picture to the minutest touch; and he describes actions, thoughts and events as exhaustively as he does persons and things. A deeply romantic atmosphere pervades all his works; they are like nothing in the real world, and yet the imaginary world which they occupy and constitute is so consistent and so faithfully elaborated that we might easily call them realistic. Cooper's method has been likened to Defoe's; but Defoe never even accidentally lapses into romance,

**His method.**

and where Defoe is homely, transparent and indifferent, Cooper is pompous, complicated and solemn. He is a writer without tact; and when an interval comes in the progress of his tale, it seems as if there never would be another movement, until the author had weighed down his indefatigable shoulders with earth, sky, mankind and all thereto appertaining.

But the reader always feels that within the mountain of solid flesh and bone that Cooper offers to the eye, there is a love of beauty, goodness and pure ideals. The things this author most loves and reverences are revered and loved by all men: he never strikes an unsympathetic note of emotion or principle. And when he is afloat on his quarter-deck, or immersed in the untrodden wilderness of the Western Continent, he gives us an enjoyment new in kind, as well as of compelling interest. To plunge into one of his great books brings a refreshment only to be likened to that of the sea and forest which they describe. We proceed majestically from one stirring event to another; and though we never move faster than a contemplative walk, we know, like the man on his way to the scaffold, that nothing can happen till we get there.

**Principles sound.**

It is one of Cooper's most remarkable feats that, in spite of his weakness in dialogue, he should have created a number of characters as solid and recognizable as any in American fiction. Indeed, it would be difficult to find anywhere in the literature of the century creatures of imagination having a firmer hold on popular sympathy and belief than Natty Bumppo, Long Tom Coffin and many of their associates. We know them, we see them and we can even hear them between the lines, as it were, that the author gives them to speak. He has fashioned them so well that they cease to appear as puppets, and seem to come to independent life.

**Original characters.**

As soon as Cooper left the realm of his imagination, his genius deserted him. The moment he began to wrangle, to exhort or to instruct, he failed. Whatever personally disturbed him rendered his writing commonplace, tedious and oppressive. Hence arises the singular badness of such of his books as are not good. And

hence we may learn how much a man can achieve when, standing aloof from his selfish passions and interests, he throws his power and resources into impersonal effort. In the one case he is, relatively, as a lump of solid clay; in the other, as an incarnate soul.

**His best books.**

It is not necessary to give a list of his many books, or to note the chronological order of their production. Of the Leatherstocking series, there are "The Deerslayer," "The Pathfinder," "The Last of the Mohicans," "The Pioneers" and "The Prairie." Of the sea-tales, "The Pilot," "The Red Rover" and, perhaps, "The Two Admirals," are sufficient. Of the Revolutionary stories may be read "The Spy" and "Lionel Lincoln." All the rest may be safely neglected, since whatever is good in them is as good, or much better, in those mentioned.

Fenimore Cooper, from the personal point of view, was a burly, gallant, irascible, high-minded gentleman who lived an honorable life, and aimed to do justice to all men, not least to himself From the standpoint of literature, he was the discoverer of a whole new region of romance, and its most successful worker.

**His position in the literary world.**

The power that enabled him to hold the attention of innumerable readers in all parts of the world, without reference to nationality or circumstance, and which has kept his books in active circulation for more than half a century, can be nothing else than genius. His books are friends, from childhood to old age: they teach high principles by lovingly depicting them, and their popularity is not more creditable to them than to the human nature that delights in them.

**Edgar Allan Poe** (1809–1849). The biographers of Poe do not agree as to many of the events of his life and traits of his character. Griswold, who had possession of his literary remains, probably knew more facts about him than did other writers; but Griswold was Poe's enemy, and suppressed or distorted whatever would have told in his favor. Ingram, on the contrary, is a blind and injudicious eulogist. Between these two extremes there have been all shades of opinion on the subject. Poe is himself to blame for much of the

**Conflicting views.**

uncertainty concerning him. His autobiographical statements were often inconsistent with each other; he attempted mystification for the sake of adding to his importance, or veiling discreditable facts.

Edgar Allan Poe.

He was born in Boston, Mass., on the 19th of January. On his father's side he claimed descent from an Italian family of the ninth or tenth century, who moved to Normandy, thence to England, and thence, by way of Wales, to Ireland, where, as the De La Poers, they appear in the fourteenth century. We know, at all events, that Edgar's father, David, was disowned by his family for having married a pretty English actress in this country. At the age of three Edgar was left an orphan, but was adopted by his godparents, Mr. and Mrs. Allan, wealthy Virginia people. They treated him with indulgence, took him with them to England in his sixth year and put him to school at Stoke Newington, some of Poe's reminiscences of which appear in his story "William Wilson." After five years' study, he returned to America, and entered a private academy near Richmond, being then twelve or thirteen years old. Five years later he was admitted to the University of Virginia, but left it before he was nineteen, and, owing to some disagreement with his godfather, took himself into his own hands, and set out for Greece, intending, like Byron, to offer his aid against the Turks. It is not likely that he reached Greece; there is some reason to believe that he got as far as London; but his whereabouts during this year 1827 have never been certainly known. He reappeared in Richmond at the end of the year, and published his first poems, "Al Aaraaf" and "Tamerlane." In 1830 he obtained an appointment at West Point, but was discharged for irregular conduct nine months afterwards.

**Biographical.**

Poe was now an active, handsome, well-informed and highly intelligent youth of twenty-one or two, who had seen something of life, was averse to steady work, had betrayed a tendency to drink, doubtless hereditary, had been alternately spoiled and buffeted

by fortune, put a high value on his own importance and abilities, and was proud, secretive and lacking in sound principle. Soon after returning to the Allans, Poe had a passing love affair, leading to another quarrel with his godfather, and a final separation; for Mr. Allan, now a widower, soon married again, and had a son of his own, who inherited the fortune that Poe might otherwise have hoped for. Turning for support to literature, he won a prize of a hundred dollars in a competition instituted by a periodical called "The Saturday Visitor." His contribution was "The Manuscript found in a Bottle," one of a group of six stories entitled "Tales of the Folio Club." The reputation thus gained brought Poe into business and personal relations with the author and editor, Kennedy, and finally led to his being given the editorship of "The Southern Literary Messenger," at a salary of $520 a year.

**The beginning.**

Poe was then twenty-six years old. In the following year he married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, the "Annabel Lee" of the poem written in 1848, after her death. She was a beautiful girl, only fourteen at her marriage, and a victim of consumption. A prosperous career seemed opening before Poe, for his stories and critiques increased the circulation of the magazine; but in 1837 he resigned the editorship for unexplained reasons. His "Hans Pfaal" and other tales and poems had added to his literary reputation, and he obtained work on the "New York Quarterly Review," where his severe reviews of current literature again attracted attention. He wrote "Arthur Gordon Pym" in this year, and it brought him some fame in London. In 1838 he went to Philadelphia and became editor of "The Gentleman's Magazine"; and in 1839, in his thirtieth year, he published in a volume his "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," on which his renown as a prose writer rests. The story "Ligeia," regarded by Poe as his best work, was included in this collection.

**Continued literary activity.**

The next year he left the "Gentleman's" and undertook "Graham's Magazine," whose circulation he soon increased tenfold. Mr. Graham, the proprietor, remained Poe's friend and

admirer, all his life. After fifteen months, Poe left "Graham's" as abruptly as he had left the "Gentleman's," and attempted, unsuccessfully, to start a magazine of his own. In 1841, his "Murders in the Rue Morgue" was translated in a Paris periodical, and the Frenchman, Baudelaire, undertook the translation of his other prose works. Poe's popularity in France has since that time exceeded that of any other American writer. In this year he also wrote a remarkable prophetic review of "Barnaby Rudge," by Dickens. Though only the opening numbers of the novel had appeared, Poe, by dint of careful analysis, foretold the future development of the plot. In 1842 he first met his biographer, Griswold, a man somewhat younger than himself. In 1843 he won the one hundred dollar prize from the "Dollar Magazine" committee, with his story of "The Gold Bug."

**Fame abroad.**

At the age of thirty-five Poe returned to New York, after a residence in Philadelphia of about seven years. He was connected for a while with "The Mirror," edited by N. P. Willis; with "Colton's American Review," and with "The Broadway Journal," of which he became proprietor in 1845. In the latter year appeared "The Raven," a poem which, more than any other one thing, increased his fame both here and abroad. He published a volume of his poems, dedicated to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whom he had long admired. He delivered a lecture on American Poets, and contributed reviews to "Godey's Ladies' Book." In 1846 "The Broadway Journal," most of which he had himself written, collapsed, and Poe retired with his invalid wife to a little cottage at Fordham. His wife died in 1847. Poe never was quite himself afterwards, though, a year or two later, he proposed marriage to a Mrs. Whitman, a poetess of local and temporary celebrity. She hesitated, and finally declined. He delivered one or two lectures; attempted to found a magazine to be called "The Stylus"; wrote a speculative analysis of the universe, called "Eureka," and published by George Putnam; and, in 1849, died in a hospital in Baltimore. He was forty years and nine months old.

**The New York period.**

Such is the outline of Poe's life — a life crowded with small vicissitudes; marked by exceptional literary distinction, due entirely to his own genius; and overshadowed by constant reverses and misfortunes, mainly ascribable to his own faults of temper and character. He drifted from one friend or supporter to another, never attaching himself long, and, like a spoiled child, making what was accorded him the basis for demanding more, and angry if more were not given. His friendships were all one-sided; he took, but yielded nothing in return. A prospect of prosperity only made him restless and discontented; he was fickle even against his own interests. To an unusual degree he was befriended and assisted by women. He accepted their ministrations, but did nothing to deserve or reward them, unless the exquisite poems which he based upon some of them are to be considered their reward. Always proud and vain, he was never independent; and though acutely sensitive to personal slights and attacks, he did not blush to rest under the obligations of charity. Secretive he was, but not reticent; at little urging he would lay bare his woes, and magnify them into cataclysms. Himself destitute of the faculty of sympathy, he was boundless in his demands on the sympathy of others. In a word, Poe never grew to the stature and fibre of a man; he was never able to unite himself frankly and cordially with his fellow-creatures: there was always Poe on one side, and everybody else on the other. Because he felt himself isolated, he fancied himself superior; what was really a defect, he interpreted as a transcendent virtue. Indeed, it is highly probable that Poe, in his own eyes, was never actually guilty of any fault. He would account himself the victim of circumstance, of foes, of inherited temperament; but he would never accuse himself of conscious and voluntary evil-doing. In short, as regarded his human or social relations, he was neither more nor less than insane, though, of course, such insanity was entirely consistent with right-mindedness in matters removed from the sphere and friction of his daily existence.

**His character.**

In truth, Poe was the victim of the disproportion between his nature and his intellect, — between his character and his genius,

His nature was passionate, but narrow and of little depth: his character was selfish, and undisciplined by his will. On the other hand, his intellect was of exceptional force and capacity, as is evidenced by his power of close and cogent reasoning, either on abstract or concrete subjects, his retentive and ready memory, his quick (though not intuitive) insight into complicated problems, the scope — wide, though not profound — of his attainments and the fickleness characteristic of an active mind unrestrained by personal weight. His genius resulted from the play between his intellect and his imagination. The latter faculty was of abnormal energy; great in itself, but gaining added force from the lack of anything to balance or control it. Poe was himself the sport and puppet of his own imagination. He permitted it to color and direct his actual life. It caused him to regard himself as a character in a tale; and many of his fantastic actions took their rise in the same feeling that made him seek to render interesting the personages and events of his fictitious productions. It was partly the inherited histrionic instinct, whereby the actor is never so much himself as when simulating some one else; partly the desire to (imaginatively) escape the shackles of his petty and inadequate nature; and in part it was unconscious habit, begun in childhood, and growing dominant with age. It was the source of his mystifications, prevarications and downright falsehoods; it was the uneasy spirit that ever drove him to turn from what was good to the phantom of something better; it was the barrier that shut him out from the fellowship of man; while yet, in imagination, he could conceive and yearn for intimacies and affections of which his feeble and straitened natural constitution made him incapable. There is real spiritual tragedy in this situation; and Poe, though he felt its sting, could neither save himself, nor fathom the secret of his malady.

**Disproportion between his nature and his intellect.**

But hostile though Poe's imagination was to his personal ease and relations, — though it took all substance out of his life, and transformed him into an alien phantom, — it was another thing in its relation to his literary product. When he was at his writing-

desk he was in his proper place and sphere. It was as natural, and indeed as inevitable, for him to construct stories as to think. And these stories, in so far as they were successful, fell naturally into two divisions, — the stories of quasi-mathematical analysis, with excursions into the horrible, the grotesque and the startling; and the speculative class, including the weird, the supernatural and the transcendental. Under the former category belong "The Gold Bug," "The Purloined Letter," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "Hans Pfaal," "The Black Cat"; under the latter, "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," "William Wilson," "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains." Of course these lists are not intended to be complete. Among Poe's failures are all his humorous pieces, and such ultra-transcendental efforts as "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" and "Silence: a Fable."

**Two groups of stories.**

Poe could not be a humorist, because of his lack of human sympathies; and for the same reason he could not paint character. There are no "live" people in his tales; they are the mechanical hinges on which the events turn. And, despite the vivid interest of Poe's productions, their strangeness, their impressiveness, he never succeeds in imparting the slightest color to them; they are exquisitely ingenious studies in black and white, and that is all. They do not touch the heart, for they do not come from it, nor are they aimed at it. Their workmanship is, in many respects, as nearly perfect as it can be made. The best of them could scarcely be improved in structure, in proportion, in artistic effect. This finish is partly due to the repeated revision given them by their author; many of them were remodelled or rewritten several times after their first publication. This is characteristic of Poe in two ways: it illustrates his intellectual fastidiousness and love of accuracy, and it proves how absolutely wanting his tales are in what is called inspiration. He made them and understood them as an architect does his house; they emanate from and they contain no spiritual depth: Poe had no reverence for them; they were structures, to be modified and improved upon indefinitely. But products of

**Work lacks inspiration; result of calculation and analysis.**

true inspiration are in a manner sacred and wonderful even to their author; he shrinks from meddling overmuch with their external form, lest he should inadvertently mar their psychical significance. No such sentiment restrained Poe, who hesitated not (as in "Eureka") to reduce Deity itself to a mathematical formula. His curious speculations on the grave, and what lies beyond, are curious and sensational, but soulless; he cares not if what he deduces be true, so it produces its proper dramatic effect. He cannot be sincere, because he cannot be un-self-conscious, and sincerity is the essence of religion.

Poe's style is illustrative of his qualities. It is precise and clear, terse and telling, smooth and polished, but it is not organic nor melodious. It is not a flowing, harmonious medium, but a labored mosaic, each sentence fitted neatly to the others, yet not continuous with them. It is an intellectual style, and there is no homogeneity in pure intellect. There is in it no long Atlantic roll, no singing sweetness, no strong, straightforward simplicity. Indeed, it has no individual flavor whatever, though it admits such artifices as italicized words and shrewd antitheses. With all his shrewdness, Poe is wanting in good taste; he does not observe the boundary line between the legitimately horrible and the revolting, or between playfulness and buffoonery. His highest flights tremble on the verge of the commonplace and the bathetic, and we can seldom travel far with him without feeling a jolt or a hitch.

**An intellectual style.**

All this, and more, may be said in criticism of Poe; but after all he is an irresistibly entertaining writer. He may be read with pleasure again and again: at his best he is inimitable. It is needless to insist upon his originality; he is original whether he will or no, for the history of literature does not show another mind like his. In point of view, in aim, in method, he is involuntarily unique. His faculty neither improves nor deteriorates: there is no growth and no decadence. It is worth noting that, in his prose works, he habitually dispenses with female characters. Women are, indeed, occasionally men-

**Essentially original.**

tioned, but they seldom have an independent part to play. In his poetry, on the other hand, the feminine element is almost invariably the dominant one, and it also appears in those stories whose motive and treatment are most nearly allied to the poetical. And this brings us to a consideration of Poe's verse.

"Poetry," he says, in his preface to the "Poems," "has been with me not a purpose, but a passion." Yet the opening poem in the volume is "The Raven," and, in his essay on the "Philosophy of Composition," he labors successfully to prove that this most famous of his productions is a mechanical and deliberate edifice. No doubt this essay is itself written for effect, and Poe does not tell us where the genius came from which makes the poem what it is, and without which all his rules and "considerations" are of no avail. But the fact remains that here he categorically and exhaustively denies the assertion made in his preface; and, while admitting the genius, we still are bound to remember the deliberation. Poetry, then, was a purpose with Poe, though it was a passion also. It was a passion, however, not of the heart, but of the intellect: it was a passion for the beautiful. Beauty, however, according to his conception of it, is not a quality, but an effect; it has to do not with the heart, but with the "soul"; and passion (he adds) demands a homeliness absolutely antagonistic to that beauty which is the true province of poetry. Poe, therefore, was personally or vitally involved in his poetry no more than in his prose. Many of his poems are indeed suggested by incidents or persons belonging to his actual life; but all real substance is eliminated from them, and they become mere abstractions, more or less "beautiful," as the case may be. No doubt, again, Poe would have put himself, his heart, his nature, into the poems, had anything of the sort been available for that purpose; but, in the first place, he did not and could not know his real self, and secondly, had he possessed this knowledge, he would have been fain to confess himself in no way suited to the province of the Beautiful.

**The source of his poetry.**

The elfin charm, the exquisite fascination, the eerie beauty of much of Poe's verse is nevertheless incontestable. At times it rises above the reach of analysis; there is witchcraft in it, or, it may be, something purer and nobler than witchcraft. God is never wholly without a witness in any soul, and Poe may have confessed God when he little intended or suspected it; even as he never was further from Him than when, in "Eureka," he fancied he had caught Him in his philosophical trap. But the charm and fascination are wayward and evanescent; sometimes they live in one line and die in the next; occasionally, as in "To Helen," or "The Haunted Palace," they endure throughout; and not seldom, as in "Eulalie," they are altogether absent. For there was no basis of certainty in Poe; his roots did not go down into the eternal verities. He pleases a certain mood or attitude of the mind, but in our deeper moments we do not go to him. He is, in himself, a psychological study of profound interest and permanent significance; but his writings are like gems of the earth — as sparkling and splendid, but as hard and as unnourishing.

**Great beauty in his poetry.**

Nor must it be forgotten that Poe's good work is very small in quantity, and that he seems to have more enjoyed polishing what he had already done, than creating new things. In the twenty years, more or less, of his productive period, he wrote forty poems, and some sixty tales or prose narratives. Of the poems, not more than ten, or at most a dozen, deserve study; and less than a third of the whole number of prose pieces — which, also, are uniformly short. Poe contends that quality and not quantity is the essential in works of art; which is true, but only a partial truth. A great artist can execute a miniature; but a great artist, by virtue of the energy and affluence that are in him, is sure to produce one or more works that are in all senses great. The brevity and scarcity of Poe's output is a sign of weakness, or poverty of generative faculty. If a poem like "The Raven" is merely a matter of solving a definite problem, the factors of which are known, why did not Poe write such a poem as often as once a month? Never was so broad a

**Small output.**

reputation built upon a basis of actual achievements so narrow, as in the case of Poe.

His critical and miscellaneous work need not detain us, the former being mostly destructive, and the latter possessing no significant features. In person, Poe was of medium height, slight and compact in figure, and with a peculiar grace and dignity of movement. His head and face were strikingly handsome, showing both the strength and the weakness of his incoherent personality. His complexion was pale, his hair and eyes very dark, his expression habitually grave and melancholy; one who knew him affirmed that he "never smiled." His voice, even in moments of excitement, was noticeably low, and finely modulated. His manner, when he was well disposed, was courteous and winning, though reserved; but he can scarcely be said to have been, as Irving, for instance, was, a gentleman to the marrow of his bones. He could display the best of good breeding, as might a finished actor on the stage, when it was his cue and pleasure to do so; but violence, rudeness and even coarseness were not less characteristic of him upon occasion. Had Poe possessed a small, bright intellect, proportioned to his nature, he would have been a happy and successful man, but unknown. Had he possessed a nature commensurate with his intellect, he would have been one of the greatest of the human race. Being what he was, his career was a conflict and a suicide; yet he achieved things that can never be forgotten, and his genius has had neither precedent nor successor.

**His career a conflict.**

Among the minor writers of this period, the following may be mentioned: —

**Susanna Rowson** (1761–1824) wrote a novel, popular in its day, chiefly because it was founded on a local social scandal. It was called "Charlotte Temple."

**Tabitha Tenney** (1762–1837) in her "Female Quixotism," satirized the tearful and sentimental style of writing that her sister-novelist practised.

**James Kirk Paulding** (1779–1860) was a friend of Irving, and a collaborator on some of his works. He wrote some of the papers in "Salmagundi," and a novel, "The Dutchman's Fireside." He united sentiment and humor, paid small heed to art, was vivacious and ephemeral. Other stories of his are "Westward Ho" and "A Single Tale."

**N. P. Willis** (1806–1867), son of a veteran journalist of the Revolution, was educated in Andover and Yale, and while still an undergraduate, published a volume of poems that gave him some reputation. Later, in Boston, he wrote tales and sketches, and edited annuals and, in 1829, established "The American Monthly Magazine." In 1831 he went abroad as foreign correspondent of the New York "Mirror." He remained six years, and his literary product appeared in several volumes,—"Pencillings by the Way," "Inklings of Adventure," "Melanie and other Poems." In 1836 he married an English girl, brought her to America, and established himself in a farm on the Susquehanna, which he called "Glenmary." Here he wrote numerous contributions for the "Mirror," and three successful plays, "Bianca Visconti," "The Betrothal" and "Dying for Him." In 1839 he started a short-lived eclectic magazine, "The Corsair," and in 1843 a periodical called "The Evening Mirror." In 1845 his wife died; but, in the following year, he married again, and became connected with "The Home Journal." He sold Glenmary and removed to his second home, "Idlewild," on the Hudson. His latter days were somewhat overshadowed by debt and illness, but he never ceased to work, until, in 1867, he died at the age of sixty-one. Besides the periodicals above mentioned, "The Youth's Companion," a paper still published, was founded and edited for many years by Willis's father, Nathaniel Willis. His best work was done as a society correspondent. Neither his prose nor his poems have stood the test of time, but they were popular while he lived; and Willis himself gained and deserved the affection of all who knew him.

## POE.

### Selections and Exercises.

### ISRAFEL.[1]

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
"Whose heart-strings are a lute";
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell),
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
In her highest noon,
The enamoured moon
Blushes with love,
While, to listen, the red levin
(With the rapid Pleiads, even,
Which were seven),
Pauses in heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
By which he sits and sings —
The trembling living wire
Of those unusual strings.

[1] And the angel, Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures. — *Koran.*

But the skies that angel trod,
  Where deep thoughts are a duty—
Where Love's a grown-up God—
  Where the Houri glances are
  Imbued with all the beauty
  Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
  Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song;
To thee the laurels belong,
  Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above
  With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
  With the fervor of thy lute—
  Well may the stars be mute!

Yet Heaven is thine; but this
  Is a world of sweets and sours;
  Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
  Is the sunshine of ours.

    If I could dwell
    Where Israfel
  Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
  A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
  From my lyre within the sky.

**Exercise.** — Upon what is the poem founded? What figure does the quoted sentence contain? What was his power? What was the condition of the heaven in which he sang? Why is he

the best bard? How does the poet's lot contrast with the angel's? If the two could change places, what would be the result? Study the technical structure of this poem; it would be difficult to find elsewhere, in an equal compass, so much skill and beauty.

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### DREAM-LAND.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule —
From a wild, weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of *Space* — out of *Time*.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the dews that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging into skies of fire;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters — lone and dead —
Their still waters — still and chilly —
With the snows of the lolling lily.

By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead, —
Their sad waters, sad and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily, —
By the mountains — near the river
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever, —

By the gray woods, — by the swamp
Where the toad and the newt encamp, —
By the dismal tarns and pools
Where dwell the Ghouls, —
By each spot the most unholy —
In each nook most melancholy, —
There the traveller meets aghast
Sheeted Memories of the Past —
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by —
White-robed forms of friends long given,
In agony to the Earth — and Heaven.

For the heart whose woes are legion
'Tis a peaceful, soothing region —
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'Tis — oh, 'tis an Eldorado!
But the traveller, travelling through it,
May not — dare not openly view it;
Never its mysteries are exposed
To the weak human eye unclosed;
So wills its King, who hath forbid
The uplifting of the fringed lid;
And thus the sad Soul that here passes
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon named Night
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have wandered home but newly
From this ultimate dim Thule.

**Exercise.** — Look up the proper nouns, and the words of which you do not know the meaning. How does he reach the land? Where does it lie? Where is he from? What reigns? Describe the land. What is the allegory?

**General.** — Study "The Poetic Principle" if you have access to it; also "The Rationale of Verse." They present the author's theory of verse. Are the points true? Does he follow his own theories?

Has the poet any long poems? Dramas? Narrative poems? What emotion do they most affect? Are there love lyrics? Lyrics of patriotism? Martial lyrics? Select some of his most melodious poems; study his method of producing the melody. Are his poems sensuous? Simple and placid? Do they produce an exaltation? Do they stimulate ambition? Do they please you? If so, by what qualities? Do they bring consolation? Are they didactic? Do they show fancy? Imagination? Humor? Tragedy? Is he a poet of nature? Is he metaphysical? Philosophical? Impulsive? Impassioned? Does he put art, truth, or beauty first? Do you find skill in versification? In what particulars?

## V.

## SOME STATESMEN AND HISTORIANS.

NEITHER the War of 1812 with England nor the Mexican War provoked much political oratory in America. No new or commanding principles were involved in them. Our rights as against England were too obvious to admit of discussion, though at first an anti-war party, based on economical and prudential grounds, did exist. But as the nation's blood warmed to the conflict, the dissentients lost ground. As to the Mexican affair, its chief contribution to literature was the "Biglow Papers" of James Russell Lowell, satirizing the motives animating this country. Our attitude was not, perhaps, easily defensible on grounds of high morality; but the war was a natural and an expedient one, and its results were unquestionably beneficial.

**Some minor wars.**

There was, however, at our own doors and within them, a topic that stimulated, deserved and received the most exhaustive analysis and discussion, and that produced eloquence quite as impassioned and exalted as did the Revolutionary cause itself. This was the institution of slavery, which, in the progress of its development, involved a profound discussion of the rights and powers of the states in their relations to the Federal Government. A small, extreme party at the North insisted for many years on the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery; a larger, more conservative party, while granting that slavery, in the states which had been parties to the original compact that formed the Union, was protected by the Constitution, was yet opposed, on moral grounds, to its extension into new territory acquired by the United States. The Southern States contended that they

**Slavery a vital topic.**

had sacrificed as much in forming the Union as had any other section, and that one of the conditions of the compact was the protection of this institution. Between the beginning of the agitation in 1790 and its culmination in 1860, the subject passed through many phases of adjustment and compromise. The vital antagonism of the principles involved called for profound consideration; and, as has been said, minds competent to deal with fundamental problems of government were not wanting.

**The widening of the breach.**

The most distinguished advocate of the States Rights Doctrine was the South Carolinian senator, **John C. Calhoun** (1782–1850). The Union, in his opinion, was not a comprehensive or homogeneous organism, but an assemblage of friendly powers, willing to act together when expedience dictated, but otherwise free to follow their own counsels. This was not new doctrine: the same thought, variously expressed, had come to the surface time and again in discussions of the Constitution. But Calhoun elaborated the proposition into a system; he preached the doctrine through a long life spent in high station; he made it so potent that it controlled the action of his state on all important occasions. After his death, the Southern States seceded from the Union with this doctrine as their explanation and justification. However, he carried the doctrine to an extreme degree, endorsed by his own state, but beyond the sanction of the other Southern States. In defending the famous South Carolina Nullification Ordinance of '32, he asserted that each state was the judge of the legality and constitutionality of any act of Congress. Unreasonable as such a proposition

**Calhoun's position in the controversy.**

John C. Calhoun.

seems now, and as it seemed then to a majority of Americans, it was not novel doctrine in his time; while no other Southern State "nullified" any of the acts of Congress, many of the Northern States "nullified" the Fugitive Slave Law in '53.

Calhoun's speeches are marked by close, severe, telling logic and impassioned earnestness, and show him to have been a rhetorician of great skill and persuasiveness. He was a man of aggressive temper and intrepid moral courage. Webster said of his style of oratory: "His eloquence was part of his intellectual character. It was plain, strong, terse, condensed, concise; sometimes impassioned, still always severe. Rejecting ornament, not often seeking far for illustration, his power consisted in the plainness of his proposition, in the closeness of his logic, and in the earnestness and energy of his manner." **Webster's characterization.**

But there was a violent party at the North that insisted on the abolition of slavery without regard to law or Constitution; and as early as 1831, **William Lloyd Garrison** (1805–1879), a printer, of Massachusetts, published a weekly paper called "The Liberator," to defend the proposition that slave-holding, apart from all political considerations, was a moral crime, and ought to be stamped out at all costs. The integrity of the Union was endangered by the principles of Calhoun on the one side, and by those of Garrison on the other. Garrison was a characteristic product of New England, in respect of indomitable energy, courage, and persistence; but he differed from the early Puritans in the radicalism and eccentricity of many of his views. In common with others of his time, he had developed the doctrines of human freedom contained in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, until he found himself in an attitude of criticism towards all forms of government; and his religious convictions were also peculiar. Nothing less than absolute and uncompromising right would satisfy him; no gradual or partial measures looking to emancipation were to be tolerated. Country, patriotism, national power, were as nothing in his eyes, if they obstructed the discharge of a **The position of an Abolitionist.**

moral duty. He wrote much, and in grim earnest, not only in the several periodicals that he edited, but in private letters to correspondents; and the burden of his utterances were ever the same, — abolish slavery, and abolish it at once! His vehemence made him a leader, and his disciples called themselves the Abolitionists. Men like **Wendell Phillips** (1811–1884) and **Charles Sumner** (1811–1874) allied themselves to this new party, and, in the teeth of ridicule and hostility, exhorted the North and antagonized the South, in season and out of season. Phillips, unlike Garrison, was a man of fine education, and a speaker of consummate eloquence. He never held, nor cared to hold, a position under government; but on the lecture-platform, which was at that time at its height of popularity, he was an influence and a stimulus of unsurpassed effectiveness. He could state and argue a proposition with extraordinary clearness and force, and commanded every rhetorical art for the expression of scorn, sarcasm, denunciation and humanitarianism. He delighted in opposition, and constantly faced and defied and not seldom conquered audiences who were all but ready to offer him bodily violence. Patriot he cannot be termed, and, ardently though he professed to love reform, he probably loved speaking on it even better. Sumner was in the Senate from the age of forty until his death: in 1856 he was personally attacked in the Senate Chamber by a Southerner named Brooks, and suffered in health but gained in popularity ever after. He was an elaborate and lucid logician, and his personal integrity and intolerance of injustice were genuine; but his manners were uncongenial, and

**Phillips as an orator.**

Charles Sumner.

aroused hostility. He represented the views of the Abolitionists in Congress.

Between the extremists of both parties stood the figures of **Henry Clay** (1777–1852) of Kentucky and **Daniel Webster**

Henry Clay.

Daniel Webster.

(1782–1852) of Massachusetts. Throughout the bitter controversy of the contending sections, they took a temperate course. At the beginning of the life of the Union, slavery was found in all parts of the country; and though not a few good men, in both the South and the North, held slavery to be morally a wrong, yet of its legality there was no question. But, as time went on, slaves grew fewer at the North, and increased in number at the South, and along with this altered distribution came a development of Northern sentiment against slavery. The North now wished the Federal Government to restrict a practice in which they had themselves formerly participated. But in 1838, by a vote of more than two to one, the Senate resolved that any interference with slavery "tended to weaken and destroy the Union."

**The growing strength of the Union.**

**Change in the situation.**

The dispute as to the right of slave-holding states to continue to hold them was not, however, a really critical one. It was on

the question as to the extension of the institution into virgin territory that the serious conflict arose. Conservative people on both sides wished to preserve the Union; but it was soon perceived that great concessions by both parties were indispensable to prevent disaster. There was need of statesmen sagacious enough to appreciate the gravity of the danger, and wise enough to avoid it. Clay and Webster fulfilled these conditions. Their controlling aim was to preserve the Union; and, so long as they lived, they were able to devise some scheme of compromise popularly serviceable; and it was only ten years after their death that the "irrepressible conflict" had to be submitted to the arbitrament of arms.

**The hour and the men.**

Henry Clay, a Virginian by birth, a Whig (as the heirs of the Federalists were called) in politics, and representing Kentucky in the Senate, succeeded, by dint of painting in vivid colors the perils of dissension, and by devising a *modus vivendi* in each disagreement as it arose, in postponing the inevitable crisis. The Nullification Law of 1833 was the result of his efforts, as were also the two Compromise Acts, under one of which slavery was forbidden above latitude 36° 30′, while the other admitted California under its own constitution. He advocated a more stringent Fugitive Slave Law; but he counselled the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and its being made optional in Utah and New Mexico. Clay's manner was winning and persuasive, while his utterances were more remarkable for earnestness and justness than for profundity or compelling power. Few great statesmen have been the object of so much personal affection as Clay: yet he was thrice defeated for the presidency. He deplored the existence of slavery, but was alive to the unwisdom of drastic measures, and looked to its gradual discontinuance.

**The work of the Great Pacificator.**

Webster was the strong man of that age. Educated at Dartmouth, he was an orator at eighteen, and from the outset was loyal to one overruling sentiment, which recurs again and again, in varied forms, in his great orations, and is embodied in that memorable phrase, — "Liberty

**Webster's one idea.**

and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" All his political effort, from first to last, was to incline men and events into conformity with this principle. All that he did was done with this end in view, and nothing that he ever said was inconsistent with it. He was a man of one idea; but it was an idea fit to monopolize a giant mind. In him the nature was adequate to the intellect, and there was no man whose physical aspect so well corresponded with his mental reputation. A writer who knew him said: "Such a figure, such an intellect, such a heart, were never before combined to awe the world. The vast plan of him: the front of Jove; the regal, commanding air which cleared a path before him; the voice of thunder and of music which revealed the broad caverns of his chest; the unfathomable eye which no sculptor could render, — all these external signs said, 'Here is a Man!' It will take an æon to compose another such man as Webster. The idea of greatness is inseparable from him. He had a heart of deep power and love; that the humblest of his friends loved him the most, was proof of a large kindness and benignity, revealed outwardly by the sweet grandeur of his smile. The melancholy of his kingly face, the deep beyond deep of gloom beneath his brows, were affecting and awful." Webster began life as a lawyer; and his speech for the prosecution in the White murder case in Salem, delivered in April, 1830, immediately after a rapid and exhausting journey, is one of the best examples of his literary powers. Indeed, it is among the best pieces of literary composition in our literature, being at times equal in this respect to the prose of Nathaniel Hawthorne himself. The picture of the murder, and of the state of mind of the murderer, are models of power, directness and simplicity; and, as delivered by Webster's organ-tones, and emphasized by his gesture and facial expression, may well have been unforgetable.

**The orator of the Union.**

His later political orations were couched in a less simple style, being designed for another kind of audience. It was a style peculiar to Webster, and, like the bow of Ulysses, only its owner could wield it. From any other lips it would have seemed grandiloquent and pompous; but

his nature was so large, majestic and imposing that this appeared his proper utterance. Only the largest emergencies were large enough for him to deal with; and when, as occasionally happened, he was called on to speak on some ordinary theme, it was like harnessing Niagara to run a saw-mill. But with the integrity of the Union depending on his words, he was in his proper sphere, and the measure of the man and of the theme were one. His genius had the breadth of the Continent.

While the bitterness of political feeling was yet in some degree repressed, Webster had the confidence of the country. His presence was considered indispensable at times of national commemoration and festival: such as the laying of the corner-stone of Bunker Hill Monument, and its completion eighteen years later; the memorial exercises at Plymouth Rock, and at Faneuil Hall; the hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Washington, and the like. But, with the growing acerbity of sectional animosities, the extremists began to murmur because Webster refused to join their war-dances and echo their threats. They accused him of temporizing and trimming, of yielding to bluster, of flattering plutocracy, and even of betraying the public weal for the ends of his personal ambition. But these persons were victims of the same sort of optical illusion that leads the uninstructed to suppose that the sun revolves round the earth. Webster remained steadfastly in one place, and uttered consistently the same sentiments; it was they, and not he, who drifted from moorings. The man who does not yield to the hallucinations and passions of his contemporaries must ever appear to them the one misguided and depraved individual; but time reverses the unjust verdict, and puts the blame where it belongs.

**Judged from prejudice.**

When, on the 7th of March, 1850, Webster rose to speak to the measure suggested by Henry Clay, it is no exaggeration to say that the attention not only of Congress but of the whole people was riveted upon him. A timid or a self-seeking man would have striven to placate one side or the other; but for Webster there was no thought save to utter the whole truth as he saw it, for the

welfare not of the parties of the moment, but of the generations to come. He threw his whole majestic and profound soul into the effort; and the speech that followed was the completest and most powerful expression of his life-long convictions that he had ever uttered. Leaning neither to the one side nor to the other, he revealed their errors to both South and North, and bade them consider how irrevocably disastrous must be the result of a false step at such a crisis. He rebuked the hare-brained and premature zeal of the Abolitionists; and the picture he drew of the consequences to the South of secession was of such convincing force as to delay for a decade their resort to that alternative. But the virtue of impartiality is to partisans the least forgivable of crimes; and when Webster sat down, though he had earned the gratitude of posterity, he had alienated half his friends, and inflamed his enemies beyond limit. The mildest censures passed upon him were that he had done evil that good might come of it; that like Lucifer he had fallen from a fatal ambition; that he was a man of mighty faculties and little aims, whose life no high purpose had endowed with reality. He died two years later, too soon by far to see the tide of opinion change: but he had done his duty in the face of gigantic difficulties and temptations, and this reflection made his deathbed serene.

**Magnetic appeal for impartial judgment.**

His eulogy was pronounced by his friend and sympathizer, **Rufus Choate** (1799–1859), the foremost lawyer of his time, and distinguished for his sumptuous forensic eloquence. He was chosen senator in his forty-second year, but his fame was won at the bar; his intellect being specially adapted to the analysis of evidence and to the subduing of juries. The quality of such efforts now rests chiefly upon hearsay; but his printed orations, and especially the Webster eulogy of 1853, prove an elevated, if somewhat too euphemistic literary style. **Edward Everett** (1794–1865), however, was the great euphemist of that age; he studied and polished his speeches until they reached a pitch of rhetorical perfection unexampled since the days of Greek and Latin oratory. The fashion has gone by for such elaborate art and artifice, but it

was precisely suited to the audiences to which Everett appealed. He appeared to remain always in a state of admiring contemplation, of pensive reminiscence, of glowing premonition over something, it mattered little what. His smooth-flowing, musical sentences have nowhere a hitch or a discord; he rang all the changes on sweetness, pathos, sentiment, optimistic prophecy. He exploited the requirements of culture to the ultimate degree of fastidiousness; even religion and morality, under his touch, are made to seem pretty, touching and graceful, rather than searching or sublime. There was a ladylike quality in his deliverances — a deficiency of rugged and resonant masculine fibre — which removes them somewhat from the sympathies of to-day. Everett achieved public distinction of a high and varied kind, and had the best education that America and Europe could provide. He was, at different times, a professor at Harvard, and president of that institution; a clergyman; a poet; a grammarian; a United States minister; a member of both houses of Congress; a Secretary of State; and a governor. He failed of election as Vice-President in 1860, and though he has been but twenty-five years in the grave, he has already faded out of men's memories. Among other public men of the period may be mentioned **John Quincy Adams** (1767–1848), a President of the United States, a versifier and a Shakesperian critic; **Robert Charles Winthrop** (b. 1809), who wrote, among other things, the addresses in the beginning and at the completion of the Washington Monument; **Jefferson Davis** (1808–1889), President of the Confederacy, a trenchant controversialist, author of "The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government"; **Alexander H. Stephens** (1812–1883), author of "A Pictorial History of the United States" and "The War between the States," an eminently temperate and luminous writer upon constitutional construction; **William Henry Seward** (1801–1872), of Lincoln's Cabinet, author of a "Diplomatic History of the Civil War"; and **Abraham Lincoln** (1809–1865), the War President, admired and respected by both friends and foes, who, though anything but a literary man, was among America's history-makers, and whose inaugural and farewell ad-

**An early euphemist.**

dresses, and commemorative speech at Gettysburg, are unsurpassed for dignity, simplicity and lofty and manly sentiment.

The minds that make history and the minds that record it are in categories widely different, yet they cannot be placed more fitly than side by side. We depend upon the latter for our knowledge of the former; historians are the complement of men of action, whose lives they pass their lives in studying and interpreting; and their work, at its best, is only less important than the best imaginative literature, — which surpasses both action and record, being, humanly speaking, immortal. The great historians are, indeed, necessarily men of creative imagination, or, more accurately, re-creative, giving us the picture and the meaning not of the ideal that might be, but of the reality that has been.

Setting aside the early historians from Governor Hutchinson to Abiel Holmes, whose useful and conscientious but unreadable works have been supplanted by those of later investigators, with broader opportunities and better methods, we find a pious and laborious Connecticut Yankee, **Jared Sparks** (1789–1866), as the author of a number of historical biographies of important personages, beginning with the "Life and Writings of George Washington," in twelve large octavo volumes, continuing in the "Life of Gouverneur Morris," the "Library of American Biography," in twenty-five volumes, all of which he edited and some of which he wrote; the "Works and Life of Benjamin Franklin," in ten volumes, which has been superseded only by John Bigelow's late work on the same subject; and ending with "The Correspondence of the American Revolution." Sparks collected, arranged and shaped material, but did not attempt to give it interior philosophical organization. His books were and will be more useful to succeeding historians than they can ever be to the general reader. He was diligent, accurate and enthusiastic, but not critical. An abler and deeper man was **John Gorham Palfrey** (1796–1881), who, in his "History of New England," gave a simply worded but penetrating exposition of the early Puritan character, doing justice both to their virtues and their faults. His work remains the best discussion of the topic selected.

**A biographer.**

The wide expanse of the Western Continent has been divided up among our historians, until not much of great importance remains. Beginning in high latitudes, Francis Parkman describes the collisions and negotiations between the French and the English in Canada and the North; Prescott goes back to the days of Ferdinand and Isabella, and tells of Spanish conquests in Mexico and Peru; Irving relates the story of Columbus; Hubert Howe Bancroft treats of the Pacific States, in forty volumes; and George Bancroft brings the history of the American colonies down to, and through, the War of the Revolution. The period between 1789 and the Civil War is still unoccupied, though Professor McMasters is working in that direction; and the Civil War itself, though frequently discussed, notably in the "Life of Abraham Lincoln," recently issued by John Hay and John Nicolay, has probably yet to receive its final historical treatment. Motley, in his "Rise of the Dutch Republic," is the only one of our historians of note who has gone outside his native land for a subject, — for Spain is used by Prescott only as one of the factors in American development, — but the theme he develops is congenial to American ideas, tracing as it does the successful struggle of man against political and religious oppression. Historians are growing more critical and philosophical as time goes on — that is, they are getting nearer to the ultimate meaning of man and life, as illustrated by the events and circumstances of the past; and we may expect that the next great writer in this vein will elicit a body of permanent truths of far deeper interest and significance than any mere picture of people and things, however brilliant and just.

**The division of the field.**

A "History of the United States" was written, about the middle of the century, by Richard Hildreth, treating of the period between Washington and Monroe, or down to the year 1821. It is a work so strongly partisan (on the Federalist side) as to diminish what value it possesses; and though its statements of facts are clear and trustworthy, its uniform dulness, which is scarcely relieved by its political vehemence, renders it unreadable. Hildreth's work cannot be considered in any respect final, and, from the literary point of view, may certainly be neglected by the student.

But the writings of **William Hickling Prescott** (1796–1859) have a literary as well as a historical value. Indeed, the obvious brilliance of his literary method has in some measure detracted from the confidence reposed in his accuracy as a historian: it was doubted whether pictures so glowing and diversified were entirely compatible with conscientious adherence to fact. But Prescott used his imagination not to color or distort the truth, but to give it body and impressiveness; and the themes which he selected were adapted to the warm conceptions of his genius. His blindness no doubt strengthened his tendency to picturesque treatment; he pondered over the scenes that he portrayed until they became living realities to him. In reading him we feel that he wrote from a mind already stored and overflowing, not with his note-books and his authorities by his side, to be consulted at every dip of the pen. His style is not dissimilar to Macaulay's; less opulent in rhetoric, but also less open to subsequent correction. Though not strong in philosophical analysis, Prescott keeps the reader sufficiently awake to the relative value of the events described; as we sweep along on the vigorous current of his narrative, we are not made oblivious of the chart of our course, nor of the significance of the journey. The time has not yet come for any one to supplant Prescott in the honorable position he holds in the historical realm. He published his "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," covering the period from 1469 to the era of Columbus. At this point Irving's "Life of Columbus" picks up the tale, and the same writer had gathered material to treat of the Conquest of Mexico by Cortez, in 1519. But, as we have seen, he resigned this subject to Prescott, whose "History of the Conquest of Mexico" appeared in 1843. The "History of the Conquest of Peru," published in 1847, brought the early Spanish-American annals down to the year 1530. His next work, the "History of the Reign of Philip II.," was designed to include the period between 1555 and 1598, but it was never completed; and to Motley was

**A historian who turns from the United States to other divisions of the continent.**

William Hickling Prescott.

left the congenial task of describing the rise of the Dutch Republic against Philip in 1572. Beyond a volume of miscellaneous essays, Prescott's labors were at an end.

What Prescott has done for the south of the continent, **Francis Parkman** (1823–1893) achieved for its northern regions. Parkman was a Bostonian by birth, a graduate of Harvard, and began his career with a futile attempt at novel-writing. But, while still early in his twenties, he made a journey to the Pacific coast, and the narrative of what he saw on this trip, published in the "Knickerbocker Magazine," and afterwards collected in a volume called "The Oregon Trail," gave the cue to his future work. He would write about Indians and the wilderness; only, instead of attempting the featureless and barren task of a history of aborigines pure and simple, with ethnological researches or speculations thrown in, he would select that part of Indian annals that was associated with the invasions, settlements and rivalries of the white races north of latitude 40°. Of course the Indian became a mere appendage in this struggle; but the scenery, the adventures and the conflicts all belonged to the wilder aspects of life.

The French, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, owned, or claimed, the whole of what is now the territory of the United States, with the exception of a strip of coast country a few hundred miles wide on the Atlantic, occupied by the English colonies, and a similar but wider strip on the Pacific, belonging to Spain. The Great Lakes, and the Mississippi from its source to its mouth, were included in this tract, not to speak of the vast spaces towards the north. After the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, France ordered all English settlers out of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The order was disregarded. Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburg) was captured by Washington; and, in 1759, the French possessions, attacked at three points simultaneously, succumbed to the English. Wolfe took Quebec, Amherst captured Montreal; and France, by the Peace of 1763, finally surrendered all its vast wedge-shaped territory, from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf. So far, all was well; but when the English began to occupy their newly acquired posts, an Ottawa chief, Pontiac, united together several Indian tribes, surprised the British garrisons, drove twenty thou-

sand people from their homes, and for a year carried all before him. But in 1764, weakened by internal dissensions, the Indians made peace with General Bradstreet; and Pontiac himself was soon after assassinated by a Peoria Indian.

**A historian of French and Indian affairs.**

Such is the historical field chosen by Parkman, and his powers were well suited to its development. There is in him a vein of poetry: he appreciates the romance of savage life, and has the faculty of making his reader live, as it were, in the scenes that he portrays. He has been diligent in collecting materials, and careful in sifting them; and the result which he offers is so attractive in style and captivating in interest as to command emphatic popularity. In taking up the various parts of his subject, he did not follow the chronological order, his "The Conspiracy of Pontiac" having appeared in its first form in 1851. Under the comprehensive heading of "France and England in North America," he then published successively "The Pioneers of France in the New World," "The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century," "La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West," "The Old Regime in Canada," "Count Frontinac and New France under Louis XIV.," and "Montcalm and Wolfe." Parkman is not weighty, but his scope is broad; and he knows the value of historical perspective.

**John Lothrop Motley** (1814–1877) was the most powerful of American historians. It was a power, however, not massive and ponderous, but alert and active: the power of the athlete, fleet, certain and concentrated. His writings show not merely the sedulous gatherer and skilful organizer of facts; they reveal a man who was more than a writer — a man deeply versed in political science, in knowledge of human nature, in ethical and religious philosophy. In Motley, the scholar did not shut out the man of action and the man of the world; his character and talents were symmetrical; he shone in society: he absorbed, but was not suffocated by the best culture of America and Europe. His mind was flexible, hospitable and of vigorous grasp; he was poised, at all times master of his faculties, and measured instinctively events and men. His remarkable personal beauty, graceful yet sincerely

cordial manners and the rich texture of his conversation made him a figure of distinction, apart from his intellectual eminence.

**In public life.**

He was, at different times, minister at the courts of Madrid and of St. James, as was Lowell afterwards; but unlike Lowell, he was made the victim of political manœuvring, and did not complete his diplomatic career. Motley was a man of high and ardent ambition: his life had always been brilliant, conspicuous and successful; and this unexpected and unmerited slight near its close inflicted a wound upon his self-esteem that pained him more than it should have done. No one knew better than Motley that a man can be disgraced only by his own act; and compared with the renown conferred upon him by his writings, the credit of a diplomatic appointment was hardly a worthy cause of pride; or to lose it, of mortification.

Like the majority of the more famous historians, Motley had a moderate fortune, which served the purpose of enabling him to travel and to make such researches as were needed for his purpose. The cultivation of imaginative literature can be carried on with little or no capital, and is certainly not apt to accumulate any; but the apostle of history must have an income. The materials and the preparations are so costly, and the time which must elapse before the work can be put forth is so long, that the writer would otherwise starve to death long before his first pages could see the light. Motley, like Parkman, first tried his pen on a novel, laying his scene among the pioneer pilgrims of New England; but he soon began to see defined before him the enterprise which was to engage the energies of his life. The idea of writing a history of

**An absorbing subject.**

the Netherlands so fascinated his imagination that he could turn to nothing else; he felt that this and this only was his appointed work. He did not seek the subject: it sought him. He began to prosecute studies with this end in view, but soon realized that he must seek his materials in the Netherlands themselves. Thither, accordingly, he betook himself, and so interested the sovereign of Holland in his project that all the archives of the state were placed at his disposal. For years he lived and labored among these ancient documents until he became so imbued with the spirit of sixteenth-century life, and so

familiar with the great figures that acted, triumphed, suffered and struggled in it, that his own age seemed almost strange to him. His investigations were not confined to the Netherlands; he followed his quest all over Europe, until, at length, he was ready to sit down and write.

The story he had to tell, beginning with the revolt of the Dutch against Philip II., continues with the portrayal of the fortunes of the successful revolutionists, and concludes with the life and death of John of Barneveld. A great and superb historical canvas is displayed before the student, with figures vividly and powerfully but impartially painted; and the successive episodes, with their bearing upon one another and their meaning in the evolution of humanity, are depicted and elucidated in a manner nothing less than masterly. To read these pages is to learn a deep lesson in human nature, as well as to become indelibly impressed with the specific occurrences themselves. The darkest and the noblest passions of mankind are revealed; the marvellous cruelty of man to man; and emerging from this sombre and bloody background, the fire of dauntless courage, the heroism of self-sacrifice, the indomitable resolve for liberty. Beside these books, the most of our literature looks pale and ineffective. The work is divided into three parts, —"The Rise of the Dutch Republic," "The History of the United Netherlands," and "The Life and Death of John of Barneveld."

**A great picture of a magnificent struggle for liberty.**

Solidity and enduring strength are characteristics of the work of **George Bancroft** (1800–1891), the historian of our colonial and Revolutionary periods. He began life as a politician and a Democrat, and gained an insight into the practical workings of the government. In his youth, he visited Europe, and wrote moral and religious verses under the inspiration of what he saw, evincing, at least, a serious basis of character. But at the age of thirty-five he was already in the field with the first volume of his history, and the eighth was published in 1864.

This statement sufficiently indicates the exhaustive and deliberative thoroughness of Bancroft's work. It took him nearly a third as long to write his book as it did the colonists to provide the

material for its writing. Nor was any of this time wasted. Unusual facilities of access to archives were allowed him, and he improved them to the utmost. Innumerable were the documents — the forgotten files of newspapers, the mouldy chronicles, the dry and dusty tomes — through which he pursued his patient way; missing nothing, weighing everything, grouping all in order, and digesting the whole huge mass slowly and completely in the alembic of his memory, until it became fluid and tractable, and from it was distilled, drop by drop, the concise, clear and precious essence wherewith his phials were filled. Or, we may compare his achievement to the building of the Great Pyramid, the whole elaborate and vast design of which was conceived and settled upon before the foundation lines were chiselled out in the everlasting rock. And then stone after stone was hewn out of the quarry, and shaped with mathematical accuracy to its individual dimensions, and borne to its destination, and slowly and heedfully deposited in its appointed place. Course after course arose, with inner chambers and passage-ways, and a vital meaning and purpose inherent in every part, until the stupendous organism stood imposing and flawless, a monument and a symbol. It is difficult to avoid strong terms in speaking of Bancroft's book.

George Bancroft.

**An historical pyramid.**

His method is essentially modern and philosophic; he discerns in a given existing condition the germ of coming events, and shows the reasons of all that happens, both innate and circumstantial; as the plant develops partly from the substance of the seed, and partly from the coöperation of the chemic forces of the soil and of the atmosphere. He demonstrates how 1789 was the logical outcome of 1620, and leaves us with a clue that may guide us from 1789 to the passing hour. The sentences in which he embodies his narrative are quiet, serious and simple: the unornamented but austerely refined vehicle of facts and thoughts. It sometimes recalls the compact and pregnant texture of Bacon's workmanship: but it never glows with the

**His method.**

inner fire of Bacon's matchless wit. Bancroft keeps both feet on the solid earth; but he recognizes the Divine force working within, and moulding the ignorant complex of mortal events, and his coldness is the coldness of resolute self-repression, not of bloodlessness.

**Hubert Howe Bancroft** (b. 1823) is personally interesting as a self-educated man who, in the face of many obstacles, has accomplished a work of unexampled magnitude. In proportion to its newness, its population, its social, commercial and historical importance, no part of this planet has been so exhaustively treated as the Pacific States have been by Mr. H. H. Bancroft. If this region is destined to become the seat of the empire and the civilization of the future, generations to come will have cause to be grateful to Mr. Bancroft for his forty ponderous volumes. And in any case his labors will have been of great usefulness: for no coming writer on the Pacific settlements need go further than to his books for material. It is all there, the chaff sifted from the wheat, ready to be made up in forms and qualities to suit purchasers. It is encyclopædic in scope and detail, a marvel of human energy and intelligence. Much of it has been written out by Mr. Bancroft's own hand; the rest has received his intimate supervision. It can scarcely be included in any course of reading, but there is a great deal of profitable reading in it.

**The historian of the Pacific States.**

"The History of Spanish Literature," by **George Ticknor** (1791–1871), may be mentioned here, as a careful and creditable performance. It is impartial, judicious and appreciative.

**S. A. Allibone** (1816–1889) published a "Dictionary of Authors," which is one of the most useful and trustworthy books of reference in the language.

Although **Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe** (b. 1812) does not technically belong to either of the categories discussed in this chapter, she is so identified with the cause of Abolitionism in literature, that she cannot be better placed than here. In her youth she lived near the borders of a slave-holding state, and her girlish imagination, already attuned to a key of transcendental morality, was inflamed by the cruelties and injustice of which she heard many reports, and some of which, perhaps, she saw. Though

aware, as her book shows, that the great, patriarchal slave-holders were often as humane in their treatment of their property as circumstances permitted, yet the evil of traffic in human beings rankled in her memory, and became blacker and more portentous the longer she mused over it. Natural taste and a literary environment had led her to try her hand at sentimental and descriptive sketch-writing; and finally, when nearly forty years of age, and at a time when public feeling was excited by the Clay Compromise bills, she bethought herself to preach a sermon against slavery, as she understood it, in the guise of a work of fiction. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was the well-known result. Taking as a text the axiom that no man has a right to "own" another, she proceeded to draw a vivid picture of the consequences of slave-holding. A more emotional, impassioned, dramatic book has not often been written. But the almost fanatic earnestness of the writer was contagious; and the plot of her tale, overflowing with sensational and sentimental interest, and harrowing in its pictures of human depravity and innocent suffering, arrested public attention. There was enough truth in the details and accessories of the story to render it formidable to opponents; it appealed to the natural human instinct against injustice, and it seemed a confirmation, in telling and readable form, of the most reckless charges of the Abolitionists. The book did harm in some ways, and good in others. It did harm by prompting the people of the North to believe in the depravity of their fellow-citizens of the South: it did good by showing the evils in which the general adoption of slavery might land us. The book was read by myriads of persons, and its publishers still are said to sell many thousands yearly: it has been translated into forty languages, and it was undoubtedly a factor in the quarrel which resulted in the Civil War. From the literary point of view, its merit is perhaps not great, either as to style or construction. Mrs. Stowe has, since then, written many novels far superior in these respects to "Uncle Tom's Cabin"; but the best of them can hardly be regarded as sound literature. They are amusing, gossipy and humorous, and have a conspicuous moral motive, but contain little to preserve them from oblivion.

**"Uncle Tom's Cabin."**

## VI.

## POETS OF THE FIRST HALF-CENTURY.

THE birth, in America, of true poetry was long delayed. No theory satisfactorily accounts for this. Poetry has appeared indifferently in almost every environment conceivable. The victims of oppression have brought it forth, and so have the oppressors. It has flourished amidst country poverty, and it has illuminated the opulence of cities. Times of action, danger and excitement have been fruitful of it; and it has blossomed luxuriantly in depths of peace and tranquillity. Philosophy has found in it its purest expression, and it has moulded into forms of grace and beauty the evanescent froth of society. Deniers of God have turned to it for solace, and it has even burst through the rigid crust of dogmatic theology. Like God himself, poetry may say, "Though thou flee to the uttermost ends of the earth, lo! I am there!"

**The late birth of poetry.**

Why, then, during nearly two centuries following the landing of the Pilgrims did we have no poetry in America? Verses, as we have seen, were occasionally written; didactic homilies in rhyme; political jingles, sentimental clap-trap, and the like. Even Hopkinson's "Hail Columbia" and Francis Scott Key's "Star-Spangled Banner" are nothing apart from their musical setting. The first poem, rightly so called, to appear on these shores was written by a lad of eighteen, was known by the somewhat repellent title of "Thanatopsis" and was published in 1817. Something of this dearth may be due to the fact that the Americans were an English-speaking people, and that the mother country supplied poets enough for two. Perhaps, also, the novelty of their adopted country, its unsettled state, the lack of mutual harmony and understanding between it and its foster-

**The reasons for delay.**

children, may have contributed to their silence. It is likewise to be said that nearly every one who was qualified to busy himself with literature was either a clergyman or the son of one; for the clergymen of New England, like the priests of the Middle Ages, were the chief depositaries of learning: and since the clergy were for the most part disposed to encourage only such poetry as was of a religious or sacred character, there was little chance for the muse in that direction. But be the explanation what it may, poetry there was none.

**No great volume of it now.**

Nor have we, even up to the present day, produced any large body of poetry of the highest class. We have had two or three popular poets, and a good many popular poems. A lyric or two of Poe's touch the high levels. Emerson was always original, and occasionally sublime and exquisite at once. Bryant, Longfellow and a score of others have now and again written something truly beautiful or great. But when we think of the great English poets, even those of the last hundred years only, our self-esteem diminishes. And yet we feel that in this land, if anywhere, great poetry, and plenty of it, ought to be produced. Possibly the very grandeur and magnitude of the obvious themes discourage the candidate's imagination, and will continue to do so until some Daniel Webster of poetry consecrates himself to the enterprise.

**The beauty of poetry.**

Whatever else true poetry shows, it must always show imagination. Its presence is accompanied by a magical lift of the soul, dissolving material conditions, and reaching the truth behind the fact. From it emanates "the light that never was, on sea or land." It transmutes into pure gold the base metal of life: it redeems the universe out of the "poliverse" of heterogeneous phenomena. At the touch of its fairy wand, things assume their proper shapes, as we read in the children's story-books — or did read until the present fashion in children's story-books set in: it reveals the immortal reality within the transient husk. It delights the mind with spiritual grace, the heart with transcendent beauty and melody. It gives, as Coventry Patmore puts it, in a lovely paradox, "the power of saying things

too simple and too sweet for words." Poetry, in short, is the language of Revelation; and true poets are seers and prophets.

Manifestly, then, poetry cannot be taught, or learned, or imitated: it is a Divine gift, if ever there was one, and the endowment is always a mystery. The celestial seed falls and flourishes sometimes in most unlikely soils; and again, men who to our halting perception seem to possess all the organization and qualifications of poets can never catch a note of the mighty music. We cannot know what "makes" a poet; least of all can he himself know it. Perhaps it is largely a faculty of self-extinction; of putting out of sight the personal, individual or egoistic element, and thus removing the barriers which obstruct the inflow of the grand, impersonal human nature, wherein dwells Deity itself; and as the notes of the organ-pipes vary with their proportions, so the poet's song is modified by his temperament, education and surroundings. But these speculations take us beyond our depth. We have to do here with the American poetry of the first half of this century.

**What makes the poet?**

**William Cullen Bryant** (1794–1878). The ancestors of Bryant, on both sides, were among the first of the Plymouth Rock Pilgrims. The moral and religious training they underwent, the narrow, ascetic and arduous circumstances of their lives, should be borne in mind in contemplating this inheritor of their traits and traditions. The consequences of such an inheritance would naturally be to dispose their subject to reticence, self-repression, stoicism, reverence for just authority, and the fear of God, in the full old Calvinistic sense.

Bryant's mother was an indefatigable and able housewife, with seven children, and everything to do. "Made Cullen a coat"; "Wove and spun"; "Sewed on a shirt"; "Washed and ironed," run the items of her diary. His father was a country doctor, and seems, either owing to the nature of his profession, or spontaneously, to have been able to talk and think about other things beside theology and doctrine. At all events, he had some classical education, and in his library

**The conditions of his early life.**

were specimens of the British historians, essayists and poets. He was something more than an iron-hearted, wooden-faced text-quoting machine; he had sensibilities and occasionally betrayed them.

He was poor and not miserly. He did the best he could for his son. When he christened him, he probably expected him to become a doctor like himself, William Cullen being the name of a physician of a previous generation. William himself afterwards thought he would be a lawyer, but, having tried it for nine years, decided to be editor of a newspaper. But this was later. The Bryants lived in the western part of Massachusetts, nearly a mile above sea-level, in a place called Cummington. There were forests all about, and characteristic New England scenery, perhaps more picturesque than the average. Doubtless, at any rate, such beauty as there was must have been out of doors, and not within. The home was the dwelling-place of vigorous and self-respecting poverty, and admitted no charms of form or color. The family customs and demeanor were substantially those of their ancestry. There was no demonstrativeness, — rather a kindly, serious, taciturn, mutual toleration. The social atmosphere resembled that of the geographical region: it was somewhat cool and attenuated. There were hearts around the hearthstone, but they were not encouraged to beat audibly. It was the home of virtue, not of emotion; it fostered quiet strength and self-reliance, not tender, sympathetic dependence. The father and mother were good friends; one doubts whether they could ever have been passionate lovers.

If William ever had a childhood, he kept the fact to himself.

**His precocity.**

At eighteen months, he knew his letters. At four, he attended the district school, and became a good reader and speller. At five, he could repeat Watts's Hymns. At eight, he made verses; at ten, he delivered a rhymed address. At fourteen, he wrote a political satire in verse, in the style of Pope; and about the same period, he composed, in poetical form, an "Ode to Connecticut River," and some lines on "Drought."

Apart from these performances, which are of no intrinsic impor-

tance, except to indicate that his heart was not bound up in childish things — apart from these precocious and empty echoes, and the household chores that fell to his share, he had nothing to do, out of school hours, but to wander about in the woods. No fervent boyish friendships came to him, and since he was the eldest but one of the children, he could find little companionship at home. He had no ineffable boyish love-affair. His only associate, in whose society he could relax his reserve, was the wild and beautiful nature that met him whenever he turned from the threshold of his father's house. A feeling for the beauty of nature — a beauty the more impressive because it discloses itself only to the seeing and loving eye — a beauty voiceless to the ear, but eloquent to the soul — a beauty impersonal, and yet mystically allied to humanity — a recognition of this beauty grew up in the lonely mind of the boy, fostered, no doubt, by a faculty of appreciation innate in his organization. He saw it, and rejoiced in it with a quiet and secret joy, but, as yet, it did not set in vibration in him any chord of responsive expression. He could feel, but he could not comprehend, and therefore he still was dumb.

Thus he saw that nature, however wordless, was always in movement; each day, each moment, there was a change. The brooks rushed to the river, the river flowed to the sea, the sea ebbed and flooded. The bare trees of winter put forth buds in the spring, and became verdurous in summer, and in autumn robed themselves in gold and crimson; but with winter again the splendor was blighted, the leaves fell, and snow and rain slowly incorporated them with the soil. He saw the dews of night evaporated by the sun, and drawn to upper regions where they were transfigured into clouds, whence they descended once more in showers, and so maintained the endless circle. The flowers bloomed, and withered, and bloomed again. The wind blew where it listed, bearing fragrance, bearing plague, journeying everywhere, resting nowhere. The stems of the trees were like the pillars of a living temple. The sunshine flooding the landscape was as a smile of peace and joy; the icy bitterness of December storms, beating down from

**He is attracted by the beauties of Nature.**

low and leaden skies, was like the blight of a loveless and unbelieving heart, bringing the death that was in itself to the innocent beauty of living things; but a death that was not eternal. Were all these things a symbol? Could they be blind and meaningless?

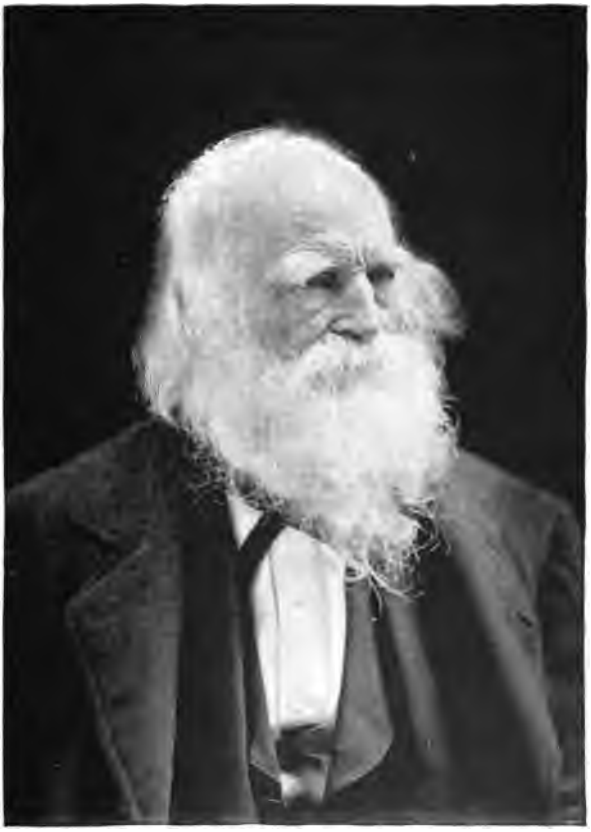
He thought of the race of men, their birth, their vicissitudes, their death. Beginning far backward in the immensity of time, each successive generation rejoiced and suffered, loved and hated, aspired and despaired, triumphed and failed; for a moment they flashed, a glittering turmoil, on the brink of the abyss, and then were swallowed up forever. But though the individual perished, the endless stream of the race kept on, and to each age its experiences came as fresh as to that first created. So it had been in the past, and so it would be forever. Was this the vanity of vanities, or did the ceaseless round of unavoidable life, of inevitable death, have a deeper meaning? Was it mere sound and fury, signifying nothing? or did the God through whom man had being speak to man through the images of the material world, and the procession of human history, revealing to him who had ears to hear the vital secrets of his private nature and destiny?

**The race of man.**

The religious faith in which the boy had been brought up gave no sympathetic or tender aspect to the Deity. He had the sternness and remoteness of a judge who sits apart, who consigns to eternal punishment those whom His Son has not redeemed, and relents only to those whom Christ's blood has ransomed. But if this were all, to what purpose was this wondrous phantasmagory of the universe? Why did it seem to foretoken a hope, a truth, a good, a mercy beyond the dogmas of the creed, if it really meant no such matter? Was not the universe the work of God's hand, and would He create an empty mockery? Might not man learn to look through nature up to nature's God, and behold a vision of hitherto unsuspected love and grace?

Read in the light of to-day, after Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Tennyson have spoken, these reflections seem obvious and commonplace enough. But in 1812, none of those voices had been heard in New Eng-

**A prophet in the wilderness.**



land: the young Bryant must needs reason the problem out for himself. To have done so is evidence of a courageous and independent, but deeply reverential mind. We may conceive his meditations to have arrived at this stage, and there to have paused. Had he not possessed the genius of a poet, the pause would have been final. It might have been so even as it was, had no influence from without come to send the quickening thrill through the solution of his thoughts, and make them spring into creative form. But this influence was not wanting.

Wordsworth's lyrical ballads had been written, and a copy of the volume fell into the boy's hands. It came like a veritable messenger from heaven. Here was a man who had seen as the boy had seen, felt as he had felt, who had grappled like him with the riddle of the world, and had loftily and serenely solved it. This was far more to the lonely New England youth than the mere æsthetic pleasure of reading good poetry. It was the assurance to him that his musings had not been in vain; that the truth he had dimly guessed at was a truth indeed; that all, and more than all that he had dreamed in Massachusetts forests, had been apprehended and interpreted by the shores of the English lakes. Long afterwards Bryant confessed to his friend Dana that on reading this volume "a thousand springs seemed to gush up at once into my heart, and the face of nature of a sudden changed into a strange freshness and life."

**Confirmation from across the sea.**

But, as the productions of the English poet were a confirmation not less than a revelation to the American poet-that-was-to-be, so the experience which the latter had independently reached saved him from becoming the mere imitator of his great predecessor. Bryant is not less original than Wordsworth, though they move in a similar direction, and are concerned with allied themes. The American retained his separateness; there is a touch and a quality in his work that always distinguishes it from that of the other poet. In its spirit it is abstracted and elevated; but in its substance it is thoroughly American. Much of it, indeed, could hardly have been written elsewhere

**An American quality.**

than in America, or by any other than an American: it is animated by the breath of the New World, as well as shaped by its conditions. It must also be said that in respect of profundity of thought and breadth of view — in the latter especially — Wordsworth excels Bryant. In purity, dignity and austere elevation Bryant is seldom deficient; but he is so uniformly narrow and monotonous that, by common consent, his first poem, "Thanatopsis," is regarded as being not only, in technical handling, equal to his best, but as supplying the keynote to everything of value that he wrote afterwards. It is hardly too much to say that when you have read "Thanatopsis," you have read Bryant.

Not the less is "Thanatopsis" a great poem: so great as to be an event and a landmark in literature. It brings man and his Creator close together, after the long and dreary interval of their seeming antagonism, with the universe of nature as a middle term between them. It lifts the individual, in spirit, to the dimensions of mankind, and shows the vital union between our surroundings and ourselves. Its comprehensive view of death implies an interpretation of life: what we had deemed the chief of terrors is transformed into the majestic and orderly fulfilment of the purposes of an infinite and benign God, who disposes all things for our good. Grandeur is of the essence of this poetry, and its grave, direct, elemental language fitly clothes the sublime simplicity of the conception. It rises high above the passions, the anxieties, the petty gratifications of existence. In contemplating our common human destiny, the personal selfhood dwindles into nothingness. The confused and warring cries of our life — the sum of jarring discords — is found to unite in a mighty diapason of sound — a symphony of joy and faith in immortality.

**Character of "Thanatopsis."**

But the whole of life, and the whole of true poetry, is not grandeur. As we read Bryant, there grows on us a perception of something missing: it is the human touch. His genius has no flexibility; it deals with the immensities and the eternities, but not with the limitations, the pathos, the humor of mortal creatures. There is nothing in him of Shake-

**His genius not catholic.**

speare's catholicity; he beholds but one vision, and chants but one song. His imagination has dissolved the barriers between matter and spirit, but it cannot perform the humbler yet not less gracious miracle of following the touching career of spirit yet incarnate, and typifying in homely examples the comedy and tragedy of experience. Comedy and tragedy alike are beyond the scope of Bryant's mind. The text of his discourse is, indeed, often drawn from homely and simple things; but he will not delay in them: he hastens to ally them with final issues, and to point the unfailing moral. He is as a man whose sight has been paralyzed by some sudden intolerable blaze of glory, who thenceforth is blind to all else than that. But the weakness of the flesh is as dear to us, in its way, as the fortitude of the soul, and is as fit a theme for the poet.

The narrowness of Bryant's view is the corollary of his character. Those who approached him became conscious of a chilliness in his proximity, not voluntary on his part, nor by any means incompatible with sincere and kindly good-will, but constant and unmistakable. In all the relations of his life, from its beginning to its venerable close, Bryant proved himself worthy of the respect, esteem and honor that attended him. We may even say that he was loved; but it was with the kind of love that one bestows upon a noble sentiment. His morality and integrity were without blemish; he faithfully fulfilled the duties incumbent on him; he gained renown in political journalism; he married, and enjoyed a serene domestic happiness; but there was ice in his veins. Only in response to the kindling of his imagination did his heart begin to throb; and it was by the abstract, not the concrete, that his imagination was kindled. The Puritan strain had been too strong for him; he could not shake it off; nay, he was probably unaware of its operation. But that which, in his ancestors, had been iron suppression of unruly impulses, was in him modified into calm conformity of outward demeanor with inward disposition; in other words, the unruly impulses had been starved to death before he was born, and with them that warm, brotherly

**His Puritan characteristics.**

glow of emotion that stimulates mutual love between man and man. Men were scarcely real to Bryant; they were elements and illustrations of a grand scheme or drama, which it was his chaste delight to portray.

But after admitting his shortcomings, his merits are conspicuous. His art was admirable; his poems are symmetrical and complete in idea as well as in form. The finishing, idealizing touches are given so lightly and naturally that there is no sense of effort. His descriptions of nature are not often surpassed; he detects and conveys the life underlying phenomena. So unpretentious is his language, it sometimes seems as artless as the talk of children; yet dignity and significance are never absent from it, and at times it flows in waves of enchanting melody. His lines "To a Waterfowl," "To the Fringed Gentian," "The Death of the Flowers," "An Evening Reverie," — these and many other poems of his are consummate poetry. In "The Land of Dreams" the atmosphere and movement are exquisite, the conception faultless, and the poet's imagination fuses into beauty all the elements of the composition. Criticism may rest before such a production.

**His merits.**

Bryant's outward life was not rich in incident. After abandoning law, and taking the editorship of the New York "Evening Post," his career was one of uninterrupted prosperity. For fifty years he was a distinguished citizen of New York, a just and fearless critic of politics, a leader of literary society. He made six visits to Europe, and travelled extensively in America. He wrote prose descriptions of his journeys, which were printed in the "Post" and some of which were afterwards collected in volumes. In the latter years of his life he undertook and completed a translation in blank verse of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," which still remains, in most respects, the best in existence. He was accustomed to spend the winter months in town; in summer, he went to his country house on Long Island; in the autumn, he often visited his ancestral home at Cummington, which he had bought some years after his parents' death. He was simple in his habits, plain and unassuming in his address. In figure he was slender, with a slight stoop. He early became bald, and

**Biographical.**

in later years his white beard and hair gave him a patriarchal look. His forehead was high, narrow and impending, his eyebrows heavy, his eyes dark and keen, his nose aquiline. Some traces of New England country brogue remained in his conversational speech, but were not perceptible in his public addresses, which, as in the case of the eulogy of the novelist Cooper, delivered in 1852, were eloquent and impressive.

Bryant was but eighteen when he wrote his first great poem, which, in maturity of thought and style, left no advance to be made. This has been held to be a remarkable fact. But imagination is never more vigorous than in youth, and poetic intuition often anticipates the results of experience. The young poet's home-training, as well as his inborn taste, gave him plain and telling words; and the nature of his subject, lofty but elemental, did the rest. Bryant never became sophisticated: life taught him little: in all essential ways he was as young, and as old, when he came to die, as on that day when he scribbled "Thanatopsis" on a sheet of paper on his father's desk, and put it in a pigeon-hole, and never spoke of it until it was found there, years afterwards, and brought him fame.

NOTE. — Several of Bryant's best poems, including "Thanatopsis," may be had for ten cents in No. 47 of Effingham Maynard & Co.'s "English Classics Series." The pamphlet is prepared for class use: there is a good biography of the author and valuable notes on the poems; the readings are from authorized readings. D. Appleton & Co. publish a cheap complete edition of the poems.

**Exercise.** — State in your own language the thought and imagery in "Thanatopsis." In what measure is it written? In what other poems does the author use the same measure? Do you find a variety of measures? What is the usual theme of his poems? Compare his "June" and Lowell's in "The Vision of Sir Launfal." Do you know of another instance of June being celebrated as a good month to die in? In what poems do you find death mentioned? Read the "Forest Hymn" and the "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood." Do you find other poems about woods? How does he regard them? Do you find narrative poems? Lyrics of the affections? Patriotic lyrics or

odes? Which do you consider the most musical of his poems? Expressive of the strongest feeling? The most majestic?

Is his poetry impressive? Dramatic? Impassioned? Highly colored? Optimistic? Sensuous? Simple? Serene? Profound? Original? Reflective? Impulsive? Humane? Melodious? Varied? Devotional? Orthodox? Joyous? Depressing?

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** (1807–1882). The amiable and studious youth who graduated near the head of his class at Bowdoin, in 1825, and delivered an address on "American Literature," was so well thought of by his instructors, that they sent him to Europe to qualify himself for a professorship in the college. He, also, had a modest confidence in his abilities and destiny. He told a friend that he "would be eminent" in something. Through life, he measured himself accurately; and the credit his writings brought him seldom fell below his forecast, and generally exceeded it.

He went to Europe in 1826, visited France, Spain, Italy, Germany and England, and came back in 1829. For upwards of five years he taught modern languages in Bowdoin. He had married in 1831. In 1834, he was offered a professorship at Harvard, and again went to Europe, taking his wife with him, on an eighteen-months trip, to be devoted to studying the literature of Holland and the north of Europe. Mrs. Longfellow died in Rotterdam in 1835. He returned to America the following year, lived in the Craigie House in Cambridge, and did his work as professor for six years. A third time he went abroad; but in 1843 was in Cambridge again, the husband of another wife. After eleven years more of the professorship, he resigned it. In 1861, he lost his wife; she was burned in his presence, while sitting in the library. Seven years later, with his three daughters, he made a final visit to

**Biographical.**

Longfellow's House.

Europe. He died in his own home, at the age of seventy-five, the most popular poet in America, and one of the most popular in the world.

Longfellow was a prolific author, and a diffuse, though never a careless writer. Setting aside some unimportant juvenilities, written before his college days, and some early essays and translations, his first book was a collection of sketches written during his first residence abroad, and called "Outre-Mer," published in 1834. "Hyperion," a semi-autobiographic romance, appeared in 1839; also, "Voices of the Night," a group of poems written during the previous few years. In 1841, came "Ballads, and Other Poems," and some poems on the subject of slavery, in the Abolition vein; and in the next year, a play, "The Spanish Student." In 1843, the year of his second marriage, he edited an anthology of "The Poets and Poetry of Europe." "The Belfry of Bruges, and Other Poems," came next; and in 1847 was published his first long poem, "Evangeline." A novel, "Kavanagh," belongs to 1849. "The Seaside and the Fireside" poems followed; and "The Golden Legend," one of a trilogy called "The Christus," came out in the winter of 1851–52. "Hiawatha," his Indian epic, bore date 1855; and "The Courtship of Miles Standish" was three years later. In 1863 he wrote "Tales of a Wayside Inn"; in 1866, "Flower-de-Luce"; in 1868, "New England Tragedies" (another part of "The Christus"); "The Divine Tragedy" (the third part of the trilogy), in 1872; and in the same year, "Three Books of Song." In 1874 appeared "Aftermath"; in 1875, "The Masque of Pandora"; in 1878, "Keramos" and "A Book of Sonnets"; in 1880, "Ultima Thule." Besides the above, he translated Dante's "Divine Comedy" into English blank verse, and published the third and last volume of it in 1867.

**The list of his works.**

At heart, Longfellow was of the people — of that great average class that constitutes, substantially, the population of the world. The range of his affections, sympathies and sentiments neither rose above, nor fell below, this medium line. This fact was the source of his wide influence — this, combined with the other fact,

that in education, culture, taste, gift of literary expression, and in that happy harmony of elements that go to make genius, he was far above the average. In other words, he had the power of saying, in lucid, pure and melodious phrase, what everybody felt, but could not so successfully say. Longfellow's success shows that few writers have had his peculiar association of qualities. Martin F. Tupper addressed as large an audience: but his fatuous, complacent sermonizing caught the proletariat only, and caught them on the lower levels of their intelligence; while Longfellow — eloquent, sincere, manly and inspiriting — pleases the aristocracy as well as the plebeians of the mind. In short, Tupper was a doggerel-monger; Longfellow, a poet.

**The poet of the people.**

Longfellow, like Bryant, was of old New England stock; and both were descended on the female side from John Alden and Priscilla. But the Longfellows were people of some means, and much social consideration. On the mother's — the Wadsworth — side they were of a military flavor; though Mrs. Longfellow herself was for peace. In her youth she was a beautiful, vivacious, high-hearted girl, fond of society, given to poetry, music and dancing. Later, she became an invalid, but was never a lugubrious one; she loved nature, and believed in the good of human nature; she was cheerful, tranquil and gently devout.

**The poet's descent.**

The father was a sound and sensible lawyer, a Representative in Congress, a cordial, courteous, high-spirited gentleman of the old school. His domestic rule was strict but kindly. Evidently, therefore, the young Longfellow had a more humane start in life than the young Bryant. There was in him none of the other's Indian stoicism, his instinct of privacy and self-defence, nor his precocious solemnity; he was cheerful, hopeful and social; his demeanor was frank and affectionate; he was impressionable, and therefore easily depressed; but his constitutional buoyancy would presently bring him up again. There were no mysteries in his character — nothing that he need blush to declare, nor anything so profound as to be beyond his power to declare it. He was

sunshiny, and loved sunshine, though he was susceptible of a delicate pathos, as his readers know. He was the antipodes of vulgarity: under any test, his nature always rang true: he was quite as "good" as Irving, and not less refined and amiable; but he had not Irving's satiric vein, nor comic, imperturbable humor. His mobile mind interested itself in a wide variety of things, but dredged no sunless depths; nor, in spite of "Excelsior," did it scale any sublime heights. Accepting him for what he was, there was not, at the time of his graduation from the little rustic college, a more charming, gentle, companionable young fellow than Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

His constituent parts so harmonized and rhymed together that he was himself a human poem, as well as a poet: or we may say he was a poet in consequence of being a poem. He must express himself, and his expression could only be poetry. Not that he was a helpless, mechanical rhymester, like Watts of the Hymn Book; he was especially spontaneous. And he was, in his measure, as sincere and earnest, though far from being as serious as Bryant. Like Hawthorne, he would as soon have told a falsehood as have published anything he had not felt to be true; and he was like Emerson in being unconscious of a conscience; it remained in abeyance in him for lack of occupation. He was innocent as a maiden; indeed, in spite of his manliness, there was a touch of the maidenly in Longfellow.

**His character.**

His poetry, after all detractions, remains a wonderful product. Some of the best poems just escape being platitudinous prose. We call over the words, note the metre, gauge the sentiment, but the secret of the charm eludes us. There was once an old lady who objected to Shakespeare because he was so full of quotations; and it has been urged in Longfellow's behalf that it is his poems themselves that have made their sentiment seem commonplace. But this goes too far. Elementary truths, when clothed in new and fit language, gain new life and beneficent power. A picture hung long in a certain place ceases to catch the eye; and a formula of truth

**Familiar truths in new dress.**

long familiar to the ear ceases to reach the understanding. But hang the picture elsewhere, and word the truth afresh, and our eyes and ears again take hold on them. Now, Longfellow experienced the old familiar experiences of life, but they were nevertheless, to him, an independent discovery. And, being the guileless, spontaneous man that he was, and gifted into the bargain with poetic genius, he had the innocent and fortunate audacity to utter them in his own independent way. A self-conscious, distrustful soul would first have made enquiry whether this thing had been thought or said before, and on being answered in the affirmative, would have dropped it, in fear of compromising his originality. One advantage of genius is, it never disquiets itself about originality.

To enjoy and profit by Longfellow's poetry, we must take it as we do fresh air and warm sunshine. To analyze is to alter them, and so destroy their virtue. It is pedantry to cavil at Longfellow for creating poetry out of materials hitherto deemed unpoetical. He felt the poem; he made it; nor can the keenest scalpel, by dissecting it into something else, prove it unpoetical.

By giving intelligent and graceful form to catholic thoughts, he brought into accord the heart and the intellect of mankind. Intellectual patricians grow to consider themselves of another flesh and blood than the groundlings; and the latter fancy that the former dwell in an atmosphere that they could not breath. Longfellow proved the unsubstantiality of these principles, and, by illustrating the simpler, more primitive sentiments and affections, vindicated the solidarity of the race on the basis of the human heart. His optimism was from first to last unfaltering; there are no morbid passages either in his career or in his poetry. Indeed, the unity of his life and his work is remarkable, and indicates that he drew his inspiration far more often from the region of the emotions than from that of the brain.

**Poetry of the heart.**

The influence upon his genius of foreign literatures, the German especially, is marked, but cannot be held beneficial. Its effect was to hamper the freedom of his expression. None of his trans-

lations equal his original work. Freedom of expression was more indispensable to Longfellow than to most poets, because the idea in his poems is so wedded to the expression as to be practically inseparable from it. To be anything, it was essential that he should be himself exclusively. His German renderings are both quaint and scholarly, but in ceasing to be German they do not become Longfellow. His translation of Dante is a faithful and noble piece of work, yet it is wearisome to read, because the spirit of the Italian tongue differs so radically from the English. As regards Longfellow's prose, its chief value is to throw light upon the charm of his poetry. It is feeble prose, and inevitably slips out of the memory. He could do nothing without metre to help him: without metre his faults become inveterate, and his virtues die away. So there are men who are good orators in the presence of an audience, but poor talkers in private. They need a stimulus and a responsibility in order to get out the good that is in them.

**Excels in lyric poetry.**

Longfellow excelled in lyrical poetry, and twice at least he was eminently successful in descriptive story-telling in unrhymed verse. Such poems as the "Building of the Ship" and "The Skeleton in Armor" stand somewhere between the two. His sonnets are uniformly sound and good, and some of them are perfect in their degree, though inferior in spiritual exaltation to the great sonnets of Wordsworth, Milton and Shakespeare. In fact, Longfellow was the poet not of the spirit, but of the letter. His poems are never disembodied souls; they always wear their material garments. At times, so sweet and pure is their form, the soul irradiates the flesh; but it makes no attempt to leave it. They belong to earth, not to heaven, nor to hell. Longfellow was too sympathetically human to rise to the rapt vision of the prophet. The kindly, smiling, pathetic earth was ever before his eyes, and its voices were his voice. Doubtless, the human is the habitation of the Divine: but Longfellow's gentle and tender nature dwelt in the day and its doings, and he entertained his angels unawares.

**Essentially human.**

"The Psalm of Life," the first to be famous of his poems, is not didactic. It is the appeal for sympathy of one who struggles and aspires. The didactic writer assumes to stand on a level higher than that of his audience, and from his superior experience to formulate rules for their guidance and edification. But Longfellow is one of his own audience. His hope, his effort, his sadness, are not of the past, but of the passing moment. It is his manifest identification of himself with us that gives him the power to move us. The difference between this and didacticism is similar to that between a living voice and a lifeless page of print. Tupper would have written "The Psalm of Life" didactically; Longfellow wrote it in a sudden gush of emotion as it stands; and it will stand a long time yet.

In "The Skeleton in Armor," and its kindred, Longfellow indulges his romantic vein. It is not his strong point. As soon as he comes into competition with other writers, he loses ground. His imagination, flexible, facile and genial, lacks the depth and strength for this sort of work. We can imagine how Coleridge would have written such a poem. "The Building of the Ship," with its candid, fervent symbolism, is much more successful. The human interest in it just balances the ideal, and the whole is artistic and moving. Such experiments as "The Christus" have the merit of aiming high, and are the fruit of laborious pains; but Longfellow's success was often in inverse proportion to his labor. The "Trilogy" was one of his miscalculations.

Parts of "Evangeline" have entered into the language. No long narrative poem — not even the "Iliad" — keeps the same level of excellence throughout. "Evangeline" is kept alive by reason of its many exquisite lines, noble and touching passages and delicate descriptions. It is a beautiful and pathetic love story, with a harmonious background; and the conception of Evangeline herself, making herself a blessing to others for the sake of her love for her lost lover, is as fine as anything this poet wrote. But when we return to the poem, after having once read and appreciated it, we find that the passages we re-read are comparatively few. The characters are not powerfully

**"Evangeline."**

nor vividly drawn; there are long stretches of unimportant narrative, and, to speak technically, the atmosphere of the story is sometimes more obvious than its features. On the other hand, what is good in it is lovely with an exalted and immortal loveliness; and the sonorous music of its verse lingers in the memory. The other narrative poems, with the exception of "Hiawatha," need not detain us.

"Hiawatha" is somewhat on the plan of the Norse eddas. Its short metre, with its repetitions and expansions, is representative of the primitive, unsophisticated character of the aborigines; and the series of legends which compose it, following one another without apparent connection, are nevertheless bound together by the thread of Hiawatha's life. We have had translations of the eddas and sagas; but this was a native American poem, and, in so far, was of a form and character unprecedented in our literature. It has a unique beauty and fascination: as charming as a fairy tale, there is a chord of wild melancholy vibrating through it; figures strange, beautiful and terrible peer at us out of the tameless wilderness that is the background: savage beasts enter into the story and play their part like the human characters: Nature herself is humanized, and the human creatures seem at times to be resolved into the forces of nature. Grim and weird passions are inextricably intertwined with qualities artless as those of childhood. Minnehaha, the Indian girl, and wife of Hiawatha, is a masterpiece of poetic beauty, a creation that only a true poet could have brought forth, or would have ventured to attempt. Hiawatha is himself a noble conception; and, fantastic as is the tale, there is a human heart in it, compelling the reader's heart to sympathize and listen. "Hiawatha" stands alone; it had no predecessors and it can have no followers. Founded upon the basis of the mass of Indian legends and traditions that have come to us, and of which it makes a most judicious and fortunate selection, it is yet a work of original genius, — original in itself, and original as regards its author; for it divides Longfellow's poetry into two distinct parts, one of which is "Hiawatha," and the other all his

"Hiawatha."

other poems. Had Longfellow never written it, he would not have merited the half of his present reputation. In idea and execution alike it is an inspiration; for although, being written, one feels that no one but Longfellow could have written it, yet, until he wrote it, no one could have believed him capable of such an achievement. No previous work of his had lighted the way to it. nor do we find its echo in any subsequent one. Like all his best productions — like all sound art anywhere — it cannot be considered save as a whole. Had the metre been different, all would have been different. It is a sudden crystallization of form and substance; a happy marriage, not to be dissolved.

**The poems that secure his fame.**

Upon the lyrics and "Evangeline," and upon "Hiawatha," Longfellow's renown securely rests. His sonnets add to his reputation, but would not of themselves have made it. In the character of the man himself could be found all that made his poetry delightful; and his face was the mirror of his harmonious and lovely mind.

## Selections and Exercises.

### RESIGNATION.

There is no flock, however watched and tended,
  But one dead lamb is there!
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
  But has one vacant chair!

The air is full of farewells to the dying,
  And mournings for the dead;
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
  Will not be comforted!

Let us be patient! These severe afflictions
  Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
  Assume this dark disguise.

We see but dimly through the mists and vapors;
  Amid these earthly damps
What seem to us but sad, funereal tapers
  May be heaven's distant lamps.

There is no Death! What seems so is transition;
  This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
  Whose portal we call Death.

She is not dead, — the child of our affection, —
  But gone unto that school
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,
  And Christ himself doth rule.

In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
  By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,
  She lives, whom we call dead.

Day after day we think what she is doing
  In those bright realms of air;
Year after year, her tender steps pursuing,
  Behold her grown more fair.

Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken
  The bond which nature gives,
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,
  May reach her where she lives.

Not as a child shall we again behold her;
  For when with raptures wild
In our embraces we again enfold her,
  She will not be a child;

But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion,
  Clothed with celestial grace;
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion
  Shall we behold her face.

And though at times impetuous with emotion
  And anguish long suppressed,
The swelling heart heaves moaning like the ocean,
  That cannot be at rest, —

We will be patient, and assuage the feeling
  We may not wholly stay;
By silence sanctifying, not concealing,
  The grief that must have way.

What is the purpose of the first two stanzas? Is exaggeration used to produce the desired effect? Do you suppose Longfellow always felt "the air full of farewells to the dying"? What made him feel so at this time? From whence do our afflictions come? Does the author believe in immortality? How does he express his belief? How does he comfort himself? What resolve does he make? Write this poem in your own language. Is the thought striking or original? In what does the beauty of the poem consist? Study and describe the imagery.

## THE RAINY DAY.

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
  And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
  And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;

Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

At what season of the year must this day have been? Do you think such a day well described? Trace the comparison between the life and the day. What is the reflection at the end? In what does the beauty of this poem consist?

## A PSALM OF LIFE.

WHAT THE HEART OF THE YOUNG MAN SAID TO THE PSALMIST.

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act, — act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;—

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

This poem was published in 1839: how old was the poet then? Is a poet likely to write a valuable "Psalm of Life" at such an age? Is Longfellow's attempt an exception? This poem is popular with a certain class of people: can you guess the class and tell why it pleases the people of this class? Write in your own language the meaning of each stanza. Is the poem a close logical chain? State the connection between the first and second stanzas. Between the second and third stanzas. Between the third and fourth. Continue the process through the poem. If the poem cannot be called a chain, what can you call it? Are the figures good? Is the philosophy striking or novel? Does it hold up the right ideal? Does it spur you up to the right thing in the right way?

"HIAWATHA."

Study this poem part by part until you know the purpose of each part, the means used to accomplish the purpose, and the connection of each with the purpose of the whole poem. Study

the imagery used. Does the poem seem to have the atmosphere of a genuine Indian legend? What ideal of the Indian does it present? Describe the style of verse. Does the form seem appropriate for the matter? Which of the parts do you like best? Why?

NOTE. — "Hiawatha" may be had in Nos. 13 and 14 of "Riverside Literature Series" (15 cents each).

"Evangeline," with portrait and biographical sketch of the author, an historical introduction, and notes to the poem may be had in No. 1 of the "Riverside Literature Series" (15 cents). No. 2 contains "The Courtship of Miles Standish" with notes. If time can be found, studies should be made of the two poems.

**General.** — *To classify his output.* Name his prose works. What was the nature of each one? What did he do in the way of translation? Name his long poems. Are they historical or entirely imaginative? How many ballads? How many sonnets? How many "songs"? How many tales? Do you find any martial lyrics? Patriotic? What poems bear upon domestic life? What ones may be called nature poems? What ones are reflective or didactic? How many slavery poems?

*To determine his skill as an artist.* Do you find many measures? Do you find original measures? Do you find skill in handling the ones he selects? Is his verse flowing and melodious? Is its music soft or sonorous? Do you find him using complicated forms? What is the quality of his translations? In what form is he most successful? Compare him as an artist with Byrant. With Whittier. With Lowell. With Lanier.

*To determine the quality of his work.* Is his style lofty, or simple? Does his poetry express fire and passion? Original thought? Deep philosophy? Every-day philosophy? Does he rise to tragedy? Do you find pathos? Humor? Does he represent exceptional, or common life? Heroic, or simple virtues? Is he didactic? Is his work distinctively American? Does his work spring from the study or from observation and experience of actual life? Is he a reformer or a *doctrinnaire?* Is his poetry the product of a cultivated intellect following classical models, or the outburst of an original, untrained genius? What makes you say so? He is said to be the poet of the great middle class: do you think this just? Why?

**R. H. Dana** (1787–1879) — who must not be confounded with his son R. H. Dana, who wrote the famous sea-narrative, "Two Years before the Mast" — became known chiefly as a critic of poetry, though he was also a poet. During the years 1817 to 1819, he contributed a series of critical papers to "The North American Review," in one of which he reviewed the entire field of English poetry previous to, and inclusive of, Wordsworth. Nothing approaching the taste, insight and subtle analysis of this essay had before been done in America: he grasped all the characteristics of English poetic literature; and his examination of Wordsworth and Coleridge, in particular, is profound and illuminating. His lectures on Shakespeare increased his reputation: and in 1821, at the age of thirty-four, he began a quarterly magazine, "The Idle Man," to which he contributed two novels of a psychologic cast, "Tom Thornton" and "Paul Felton." Rugged and abrupt in style and intense in feeling, they portray the darker human passions, set off against a stern glow of moral purpose. His poems, published in 1827, under the title of "The Buccaneer, and Other Poems," were too psychological to be popular: but they picture with striking vividness both the outward and the inward world, and show a truly Calvinistic conception of the reality of sin. Their power is greater than their art: and their beauty is overshadowed by their gloom. Dana was one of those men who gave glimpses of powers apparently equal to any achievement, but who never — for whatever reason — achieve quite what is expected of them.

**Washington Allston** (1779–1843) was the American pioneer of general culture. The crude age in which he lived was astonished at his doctrine, and regarded him as a prophet. He was a painter, and his pictures have grace and a certain spiritual comeliness, but they lack strength and fibre. He wrote a romance, "Monalde," which had many excellences, but not the quality of impressiveness; unless we except the description of a picture of a soul struggling in the toils of sin, which is more effective than any of Allston's actual

**A Pioneer of culture.**

pictures. He lectured on art, and his audiences sat in rapt enthusiasm; but no echo of his lectures now remains. He "conversed" in the monologue fashion afterwards adopted by Alcott, Margaret Fuller and other enlightened minds of the period, and his interlocutors were ravished by his wisdom; but they neglected to take down the words in which he propounded it. He meekly patronized the disciples who came to him for spiritual and æsthetic counsel and consolation, and, to adopt the language of one of them, "he lived above the world, happy in the free exercise and guardianship of his varied powers." Finally, he produced some sonnets which are placid and pale-hued records of personal feeling, and whose chief merit is the negative one of being free from vulgarity. But though the definite information to be had about Allston arouses a certain intellectual impatience, it would be wrong to dismiss him as a vapid and featureless pretender. He was both loved and admired by some of the ablest men and women of his day. Dana speaks of his mind as having "the glad but gentle brightness of a star, sending pure influences into your heart, and making it kind and cheerful." Mrs. Jameson, the English writer on art, expressed her surprise to witness such opulence of thought conveyed in such seemingly careless talk; Whipple alludes to "the inestimable privilege of hearing him converse"; and when he died, the general exclamation was, "what a light is extinguished!" Probably, as Whipple himself suggests, he was "one of those men whose works are hardly the measure of their powers — who can talk better than they can write, and conceive more vividly than they can execute."

**Fitz-Greene Halleck** (1790–1867). Here was a man of strong individuality, and of power well distributed and proportioned, who resembled Dana and Allston only in not having fulfilled the hopes that were entertained of him. But, in his case, negligence proceeded, not from any characteristic lack of force, or ability of expression, nor from a conviction that his mental affiliations were too alien from those of the generality to admit of any prospect of a

**One of our earliest poets.**

mutual understanding. Halleck's mode of expression was strong, direct and masculine: there was no mysticism in his composition; he had good sense, sturdy humor and hearty emotions; what he said he meant, and there was never any difficulty about comprehending him. Moreover, he possessed an imagination that was vivid, though not sublime, an unusual command of words, and, thanks to much practice in childhood, singular facility in the use of rhyme and metre. But there was in Halleck a semi-jocose cynicism and skepticism, which, when his feelings were not aroused, led him to pooh-pooh inspiration and ambition, and to excuse an innate tendency to intellectual indolence by insisting upon the vanity of mortal achievements and aspirations. This attribute became confirmed as he grew older, and more than half his life was passed unproductively so far as literature was concerned. There was a touch of Thackeray in his temperament, but physically he was a rather small, lean, dry man; courteous and agreeable, but given somewhat to irony. In his youth, he was a man-about-town, and he and his friend Drake amused themselves and New York by writing, and publishing in the "Post," a series of rhymed squibs on society called the "Croaker Papers." Halleck afterwards wrote "Fanny," a narrative satire in verse in the vein of "Miss Kilmansegg," and "Nothing to Wear." His serious pieces were better. "Marco Bozzaris" is as widely known as anything in American verse: "Alnwick Castle," fruit of a visit to Europe, is good and spirited descriptive poetry; "Red Jacket" is an effective piece of Indian portraiture; "Burns" is written with more depth of feeling and explicit homage than he was accustomed to betray, and the lines on the death of Drake came from his heart and have become a part of our language. Halleck professed great admiration for Campbell's concise and powerful poetry: he thought Byron a rhetorician. He was fond of old books, of men and of the city, though he lived much of his life at Guilford, where he was born. He was employed in the office of John Jacob Astor, and his tolerable pecuniary circumstances contributed to his literary idleness. He was conservative in politics: his father had been a royalist

during the Revolution. For a man who did so little, Halleck is well remembered.

**Joseph Rodman Drake** (1795–1820) was according to Halleck, "the handsomest man in New York, with a figure like an Apollo." He was a youth of buoyant spirits but delicate health; playful, disputatious, full of healthy sentiment, an ardent patriot: he had fancy, but not genius; his poetizing tendency was strong, and he indulged it easily though carelessly. Neither Drake nor Halleck paid much attention to finish and accuracy in their work. Drake was poor, but married a wealthy young woman who was much in love with him. He travelled to Europe, and afterwards to New Orleans, in the hope of staving off consumption; but the disease carried him off the following year, at the age of twenty-five.

Drake's "Ode on the American Flag" first appeared in the New York "Evening Post" over the signature of "Croaker." There is fire in it, inclining to fireworks: overmuch color, figures too extravagant: but it is all in keeping, and its sincerity of feeling has kept it alive. The four concluding lines are said to have been written by Halleck. "The Culprit Fay" is a much longer poem, in the style of Walter Scott's romantic verse. It overflows with delicate and playful fancy, and tells its tale with vivacity. It has the merit of an American background, though, indeed, Fairyland can hardly be confined by geographical conditions. Its local and temporary fame were remarkable; but grace and fancy help little towards immortality, especially when employed so heedlessly as by Drake.

**The "American Keats."**

The names of several minor versifiers are connected with this period; but the student can afford to pass them by. Poe has been already considered; Emerson, whose poetry was incorporate with his philosophy, will be examined in the next chapter.

## VII.

## RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL REFORMERS.

NEW and untested circumstances make the mind restless and speculative. A man who finds himself for the first time in a strange country feels an impulse to cut loose from the habits of his previous life, and try strange experiments. He wishes to make a new interior world, to answer to the new external one.

After America had taken her place among the nations of the earth, a restlessness of this kind began to be manifested by a certain class of the population. It must be borne in mind that America represented a fresh departure in the direction of civil and religious freedom. It was not simply an aggregation of people in a remote geographical region: it was the incarnation of a great spiritual idea. And, since one advance or reform suggests others, it is not surprising that America should have become the arena of numerous social and religious theorists.

**America a new departure.**

Moreover, a spirit of change had, for a good many years past, begun to disturb the atmosphere of Christendom in Europe. The French Revolution, at the close of the last century, had attempted virtually to uproot nearly all human beliefs and traditions, and to make the world over new. A reaction followed with proportionate swiftness; but not a few of the ideas then struck out continued to live, and exert an influence. One French philosopher, Fourier by name, published his views in several elaborate volumes, going over the whole ground of human civilization, proposing radical reforms and casting the horoscope of the future. These books found readers in the United States, and not a few of the readers became disciples also. Coleridge, in England, had a scheme of communistic life, which

**Social Utopias.**

he called "Pantisocracy," and in which he interested Southey, Lovell and others. Godwin and Shelley were likewise dissatisfied with things as they were, and had plans, more or less definite, for altering them for the better. All these radicals took their cue from Plato, who, centuries before the birth of Christ, had evolved the conception of his "Republic."

But in America, more than elsewhere, actual experiments were made. The visionary was oddly mingled with the practical. Reforms were urged, separately or collectively, on almost all lines conceivable. Besides the comprehensive Fourierites, and other communistic groups deriving from his, there were persons who proposed to abolish liquor, war and executions; to bring woman's dress into conformity with man's; to introduce various modifications into diet; to do away with money, and even with books; to dispense with the ceremony of marriage, leaving men and women free to make and unmake bonds of union at pleasure; to put an end to all carnal unions; to repudiate all outward administration of law, leaving man to be a law unto himself; to pretermit religious forms and observances; and more of the same sort. Other and wiser men, perceiving that human nature was at the bottom of human institutions, and would revive whatever should be destroyed, sought to carry the war into a more interior region, and, by philosophical reasonings and demonstrations, to persuade mankind to a vital abandonment of error. But the majority of those who were at odds with existing things, were rather destructive than creative.

**American experiments.**

Several communities were formed, and a few of them, such as the Shakers, still survive. In 1830, a man named Joseph Smith founded the sect of Mormons, with a new book of Divine Revelation, and a dogma of polygamy. William Miller, in 1839, prophesied the approaching destruction of the world, and made many converts to his doctrine. The Oneida community was based upon peculiar views as to the relations of the sexes. Some of the most enlightened persons of the time met at Brook Farm, in the neighborhood of Boston, and tried to live a primitive and philosophic life. A great deal of earnestness was sporadically exhibited; but

the nation at large was affected only by the agitation for the abolition of slavery. To the results of this agitation we have already alluded.

Whatever was really important in the questionings of this period was embodied in the writings of a handful of men of genius. The significance of some of these writings has only begun to be appreciated. They reflect the pure essence of the spirit of the time Their visible practical effect has been small, but the seed they sowed is likely to produce larger results as time goes on. In order to acquire an insight into the general aspect and drift of the fermentations at work between 1830 and 1850, the student may profitably read Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Earth's Holocaust" and his "Blithedale Romance." They were written forty years ago or more; but in them Hawthorne weighed what was passing, and delivered thereon the impartial verdict of posterity.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson** (1803–1882) was born in Boston May 25th. Of the five sons of his parents, he was the second. His ancestors had been clergymen for several generations. His father, Rev. William Emerson, died when Ralph was eight years old. His aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, a good classical scholar, directed his studies; and her friend Sarah Bradford, another singularly learned woman, assisted her. At fourteen Ralph entered Harvard College. Neither at school nor at college was he distinguished. He liked the insight into forms of life to be found in the classic authors; he found nourishment in Montaigne and the poets; he disagreed with mathematics; and in general he acted upon a principle that he enunciated long afterwards: "What we do not call education is more grace than what we do call so." Neither was he given to bodily sports while as to his moral deportment, he could not be said to have any. He was pure and upright by instinct, and knew of "temptation" by hearsay only. Virtue, as implying struggle with and victory over evil, was never predicable of Emerson. Goodness and truth were spontaneous in him; and he was inveterately innocent from first to last.

**Early life.**

The family was poor: Ralph's brother William earned money by teaching school, part of which went to maintain Ralph in college; the latter also practised pedagogy. Two years after graduating he began studying for the ministry under Dr. William Ellery Channing. In 1823, he was ready for the pulpit, but his ill health took him to Florida. In 1829, he was appointed pastor of the Second Church in Boston, married Miss Ellen Tucker and set to work. Three years later his wife died, and Emerson, who had found himself out of accord with orthodox theology, resigned explicitly from the clerical calling, and went to Europe. He met there whomsoever was of intellectual eminence sufficient to attract his curiosity. Among them was Thomas Carlyle, whose friendship with Emerson is part of their common history. In 1833, returning home, he lived in the "Old Manse" at Concord. That autumn he began the practice of Lyceum-lecturing which he was to continue for six and forty years. In 1836, he wrote his first essay, "Nature," of which, during the ensuing twelve years, was sold an average of one copy every ten days. At the time of his death, he was the author of rather less than a dozen volumes of essays, criticising and expounding life, and of a collection of poems, written from the same point of view, and with the same aim as the essays. Comparatively small in amount though his literary work was, its quality had made him famous all over the world: the little house in Concord where he dwelt with his second wife and family, was the goal of pilgrims from all civilized nations. He was loved and reverenced as few men have been, his reputation shed lustre upon his country, and the stimulus he imparted to pure living and high thinking was extraordinary.

**His later history.**

Emerson's House.

His ancestors, being both Puritan and clerical, had maintained a behavior morally unimpeachable during several generations: but the Calvinistic doctrines did not sour in them the native milk

of human kindness and charity. They found the doing of good a task more congenial than denouncing woe and punishment.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, consequently, was born with a disposition nearly angelic. The human nature in him was the same as in all men, but those elements of it that prompt to disobedience of moral laws were in abeyance. And though Emerson could not help knowing that goodness must have a logical opposite, known as evil, and that many persons habitually break the ten commandments, yet this was purely hearsay knowledge on his part: he had had no personal experience of its truth. He therefore was as an intelligent inhabitant of an equatorial region who hears about the state of things at the poles. He recognizes that ice and cold are possible, and his confidence in the veracity of his informants assures him that these phenomena actually exist. But how they feel or what they look like he can only conjecture.

**An angelic disposition.**

From the nature of the case, Emerson could not have realized the singularity of his relation as regarded evil. Being like other men in other respects, why not also as to his moral *status?* And his ignorance of the truth was inevitably shared by his disciples. They believed that he strove so constantly and vigorously against temptation that it never overcame him: whereas he supposed evil to be absolutely what moralists describe it as being relatively, namely, evil-smelling and revolting; and that his avoidance of it was no more commendable than is a fastidious woman's avoidance of assafœtida and lepers. That evil could ever seem alluring and desirable, it never entered into his head to conceive: nor could he, therefore, comprehend what appeared to him to be the insane perversity of its votaries.

In short, Emerson was that rare phenomenon, a type of pure human innocence. He neither did, nor was tempted to do, evil. The experience that reveals to a man that he is compact of evil, from which only God's mercy can rescue him — in religious parlance, regeneration — was as unknown to Emerson as to an infant a year old. The voice of conscience, convicting men of sin, and calling to repentance, was

**A type of innocence.**

never heard in his soul. He was so far from being virtuous (that is, obedient to the moral law from a sense of duty, and against natural inclination) that he was never other than spontaneously good — just as a rose is spontaneously sweet. The men of the Golden Age, that poets sing of, were innocent, because sin, and its companion, conscience, did not as yet exist. The men of the Millennium, which optimists foretell, will be innocent, because ages of voluntary abstention will have so deadened sin that its presence in human nature will be forgotten. Such an innocent man was Emerson, though he lived in the midst of this self-conscious, conscience-tortured, duty-ridden Nineteenth Century.

His disciples found so much in him, that they could not understand why they failed to find more; while Emerson, on his side, was at a loss to guess what more they could want. There was no common ground between the parties; they played at cross-purposes. A man whose books had so many vivid insights into life, must, they fancied, be deeply versed in spiritual struggles: but to their interrogatories he could make no answer. He was always ready to hear what they had to say, being to the full as inquisitive as they; but as to solving their perplexities by arguments, or by reference to facts of experience, it was quite beyond him. He had not so much as crossed the boundaries of regions in which they supposed him habitually to reside.

**Meagre spiritual experience.**

It was said Emerson disdained to argue. But it was not disdain; it was inability. He had no ratiocinative faculty. What truth he had came to him by intuition: he would only say of it, "I feel it to be true." He cared nothing for consistency. He might regard as interesting the fact that two or more of his statements conflicted; but he declined to revise them. They must all alike be true, despite appearances. Logical connection was another thing he failed to appreciate. His essays might be read either forwards or backwards, and their titles did not certify to their contents. No matter: Emerson would only smile and remark that that was his way of writing.

**No ratiocinative faculty.**

The truth was Emerson spent his life in saying, in various ways and to diverse purposes, only one thing. He had had a revelation, or an intuition, of what creation meant; and he proffered that in response to all demands made upon him. As the sky, to our investigating gaze, replies with star after star, and with nothing but stars, all practically repetitions of one another, so in any one of Emerson's essays intelligently read may be found the germs of his whole philosophy: nor is there anything else to find there. They would appear even less conventional than they do had not their author, supposing himself to be like other people, tried to conduct his external affairs as they did theirs.

**He had but one gospel.**

His deficiencies were more interesting and instructive than his qualities. He never showed marked intellectual power; he lived and wrote by a sort of divine instinct. The elaborate and carefully oiled intellectual machinery, by dint of which we make our investigations and reach our conclusions, was so much waste lumber to him: he found what he sought (if he found it at all) immediately: he opened his eyes, and it was before him. He found no value in church or ritual, because religious trust came to him spontaneously. He saw no sense in governments, because he himself went right involuntarily. He would not go all lengths with the abolitionists, because he perceived that slavery was not in fetters, but in feeling: the way to emancipate the slave was to make him comprehend his dignity and freedom as a human being: the real slaves in the South, in his view, were the slave-holders. He had misgivings about patriotism: true patriotism should consist in the ambition to contribute to other nations as many instead of as few as possible of our own advantages. In a word, Emerson's alien constitution renders him one of the most invaluable of critics, as a man from another planet might be.

**A spontaneous man and writer.**

But the moment he began to go behind his intuitions he got into trouble. For him to attempt to draw an inference was fatal. Unless he talked in the style of the Delphic oracle, he was apt to talk nonsense. His descriptions of persons or things were felici-

tous, but in criticising them he was apt to err. His essay on "Farming," for example, is admirable so far as its abstract statements are concerned, but affords no help or encouragement to practical farmers. In treating of any subject, his tone and his conclusions are always cheerful and inspiriting; but when we turn from his books to real life, we discover that he has never entered into realities; that he has exaggerated man's actual powers, and underrated his difficulties. Emerson's works are like a soap-bubble; they mirror and enhance all beauty, and delight and educate the æsthetic sense; but they can be applied to no concretely useful purpose. At the contact of mortal fingers they vanish. His writings have therefore always been more applauded by young than by old persons. The former, looking forward to life, are apt to believe all things possible: the latter, knowing life, know the limitations of personal effort. Nevertheless, Emerson is good reading for the young. Like music, he uplifts the mind, and is consolatory. His sayings are true for the soul, though not for the body; and the issues he contemplates may ultimately arrive.

He was one of the most unself-conscious of men. This was due to his inexperience of inward struggle, which makes a man acquainted with himself. In the sense of being separate and unique in his mental proportions, he was and appeared intensely individual: but he had no perception of his own individuality, and could not talk or write or think about himself: he always looked outward, and led his interlocutor away from the personal to the universal. He was not, in fact, able clearly to distinguish between men and mankind. He thought that an individual could and ought to do the work of the race: that the powers of all human nature could be concentrated in any one person. Speaking of the communistic idea, he said, "A man is weaker for every recruit to his banner." He delighted in the contemplation of such men as Moses, Cæsar, Shakespeare, Napoleon, Goethe, because their power seemed to illustrate his theory. He would not allow that Christ was more than a man, because he believed any man capable of being a Christ. He ignored the finality of individual boundary lines.

In only one of his books — "English Traits" — does Emerson attempt portrayal of character. He succeeds just in proportion as he generalizes. He gives a strong impression of English characteristics as a whole, but no lifelike portrait of any English person.

**His "English Traits."**

But "English Traits" is the only autobiographical fragment of Emerson that we possess. Inadvertently, his preoccupation with others reveals himself. He reports their answers to his questions; and both the answers and the questions shape out for us the questioner. We infer a man from the sum of his likes and dislikes; and, more compendiously than elsewhere, Emerson's likes and dislikes are betrayed in "English Traits."

His analysis of nature is, of course, his main achievement: it forms the explicit subject of his first published book, and it is the background of all of them. It contains much of manifest truth, and fails only when the author tries to account for and correct his own insights. He shows the influence of both Plato and Swedenborg, and when their philosophies approach his, he becomes obscure and uncertain. His desire in this first essay to be complete led him astray. He trusted to the feeblest part of his intellect, and it betrayed him. His readers, presuming that one who could write truth so translucent, could write nothing else, endeavored to swallow the book whole, and supposed it must be their own incapacity, and not Emerson's, that stood in their way. They did not understand his whole meaning, because he himself did not. And he could not set them right, because he did not know where he was wrong. His philosophy may be briefly outlined as follows: —

**His main achievement.**

He begins by observing that it is a sufficient account of that appearance we call the world, that God desires to instruct man's mind. Nature, in the largest sense, is to be regarded as the sum of everything that is not man's soul; but of that soul it is the symbol. The material, visible universe is the terminus or continent of the spiritual and invisible sphere: it is the basis of our speech, and the means of our discipline. Its various parts and forms are incarnations of God's

**Outline of his philosophy.**

infinite ideas or affections. As man rises in intelligence, his thought turns the raw material of nature's kingdoms into uses, and thus the world gradually becomes realized human will. Man is the form of the highest principle in nature: all other forms are degradations of his.

Since the whole effect upon man of nature is a disciplinary one, we reach the conclusion that it has no actual or unrelated existence. Things are not really spread out in space; they are painted on the firmament of the soul. In confirmation of this truth, we note that the best moments of life are those awakenings of the higher powers, when, as in a vision, we behold God, and nature reverently retires from consciousness.

In this rapt state, to which all men are capable of attaining, by piety or by passion, the soul sees the world as one vast picture painted by God on the instant eternity: the distinction of past and present, of time and space, ceases to appear. We thus recognize the universe as a veil or illusion, embodying eternal ideas. But idealism, while accounting for nature on other than mechanical and chemical principles, is but a negative philosophy; it denies matter, but does not affirm God: it is at best but an introduction to such affirmation. But we now observe that individuality begins when nature has ascended to mind, — and the movement of nature is ever in the direction of intelligence. Evolution of the fittest, therefore, points to spiritual man as being the final cause of nature. The universe is not alien to man, but the sensible shadow or projection of a Being having the form of man — that is, of God. God does not build up nature around us, but puts it out through us; or we may say that man, having by his creation access to the mind of the Creator, is himself the creator of the finite.

Here, however, arises a difficulty. The world is full of ugly, evil and harmful things: how came they there if man, the cause of the finite, is but the channel through which the Infinite God works? Emerson accounts for it on a theory of degradation. Man has deteriorated, or lapsed, from his former innocent and godlike state. We are become strangers in nature and aliens from God. Man is a god in ruins — the dwarf of himself. He is

subjected to death, which prevents him from becoming too much confirmed in his degenerate ways, and to birth, which enables him to start afresh: infancy being a sort of perpetual Messiah. The universe still fits him, but colossally; he now timidly adores the work which aforetime he produced. Yet, occasionally, a man appears able once more to act on nature with his whole force — to fill it and command it: and through such a man God goes forth into the world anew. But, for the most of us, the universe lies a heterogeneous and uncomprehended ruin, because man has lost his intuitions, and is disunited with himself.

Such is the gist of Emerson's interpretation of Creation. It fails in two essential points. But this is not the place to analyze his analysis.

Emerson's poetry has the same aim and motive as his prose; and when he chooses a subject sublime enough to match his genius, the result is incomparably the loftiest and profoundest poetry produced in this country. The poet and the philosopher are at one in him: the one not less than the other "postpones the apparent order and relation of things to the empire of thought"; he "invests stones and dust with humanity, and makes them the words of reason"; and at this level of inspiration, "the memory carries centuries of observation in a single formula." But Emerson the poet is Emerson the philosopher transfigured. Here his strength is at its maximum, and his weakness seldom appears. The reading of some of his poems produces a sensation almost painful — the sensation of exquisite spiritual pleasure carried to the farthest point. Such poems must be read in high moods only, and a little at a time: there is a holy brightness and beauty in them. Both in subject and in style they stand apart. They express the great elementary ideas; the forms of outward nature (as he says in the "Sphinx") "fade in the light of their meaning sublime." The series of poems on Love — "To Rhea," "Give all to Love," "Initial, Dæmonic, and Celestial Love," and others — touch the heights and depths of the mighty topic; they recall no other poet, and really leave little for any other poet of love to

**As poet.**

do. The philosophic or mystic poems, such as "The Sphinx," "Brahma," "Uriel," "Guy," "Forerunners," are concise and masterly statements, and often the purest poetry; but they are less successful than the love poems, and, considering the real simplicity of the principles they discuss, have given readers unnecessary perplexity. Obscurity in poetry is a fault; there may be meaning underneath meaning, as in nature, but each reader should be able to see at once the meaning correspondent to his mental scope. The purport of "The Sphinx" is to explain the origin of evil, which, we are told, is due to man's passionate yearning for good. Happiness can dwell only in the perception that the perfect happiness must ever be unattainable. The true lover at last feels that he cannot endure to be loved for what he is, but only for what he can never be. The only real repose is in unresting progress, for which the restraints of space and time afford an impetus. Sin, by awakening remorse, creates ineffable peace — the recognition of Divine forgiveness.

In "Uriel" a similar view of evil is taken: evil is the transition from earth to heaven. The consequences of the evil deed return inevitably upon the doer, and he is purified and uplifted by this punishment. "Brahma" is simply a terse metrical version of the Oriental paradoxes concerning the Deity; the aspect which the Infinite inevitably assumes to the finite. "Guy" and "Mithridates" are pictures of man restored to sympathy with and dominion over nature. "Forerunners" tells of the ideals of life which we never can realize, but which, by stimulating to effort, make life alive.

A number of Emerson's poems treat, in a noble style, of the visible world and of the spiritual meaning of scientific achievements. Such are "Hamatreya," "Woodnotes," "Monadnoc," "Merlin." Here he leads the way to the poetry of the future, which must regard all facts as metaphors of supersensuous truth. Finally, there are poems whose "beauty is their own excuse for being," such as "Rhodora," "Forbearance," "Painting and Sculpture," "The Humble-Bee," "Good-Bye" and the Concord "Hymn."

Emerson pays little regard to metre or conventional form in his verse. When the theme is large enough, the poet, as he remarks in "Merlin," may "mount to Paradise by the stairway of surprise."

**Technical defects.**

Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether metre and symmetry can, save very exceptionally, properly be neglected: and it is evident that Emerson's remissness is often due to a defect of ability. Indeed, he has admitted as much, and has intimated that his poetic product would have been more copious than it is, had his faculty in this direction been greater. Meanwhile, his poems, even in this respect, are a welcome relief from the flawless emptiness of most contemporary verse.

**A great original force.**

Upon the whole, Emerson stands as one of the few great original forces in literature. Some of his reputation doubtless results from the fact that comparatively few have understood him: for there is a large class of persons who like to claim credit for seeing through mill-stones. But his true fame is likely to increase as time passes: as mankind approaches the level on which he stands, his influence will broaden, and be more discriminatingly recognized.

## Selections and Studies.

### THE SPHINX.

The Sphinx is drowsy,
  Her wings are furled:
Her ear is heavy,
  She broods on the world.
"Who'll tell me my secret,
  The ages have kept?—
I awaited the seer
  While they slumbered and slept:—

"The fate of the man-child,
  The meaning of man;
Known fruit of the unknown;
  Dædalian plan;

Out of sleeping a waking,
  Out of waking a sleep;
Life death overtaking;
  Deep underneath deep?

"Erect as a sunbeam,
  Upspringeth the palm;
The elephant browses,
  Undaunted and calm;
In beautiful motion
  The thrush plies his wings;
Kind leaves of his covert,
  Your silence he sings.

"The waves, unashamed,
  In difference sweet,
Play glad with the breezes,
  Old playfellows meet;
The journeying atoms,
  Primordial wholes,
Firmly draw, firmly drive,
  By their animate poles.

"Sea, earth, air, sound, silence,
  Plant, quadruped, bird,
By one music enchanted,
  One deity stirred,—
Each the other adorning,
  Accompany still;
Night veileth the morning,
  The vapor the hill.

"The babe by its mother
  Lies bathed in joy;
Glide its hours uncounted,—
  The sun is its toy;

Shines the peace of all being,
Without cloud, in its eyes;
And the sum of the world
In soft miniature lies.

"But man crouches and blushes,
Absconds and conceals;
He creepeth and peepeth,
He palters and steals;
Infirm, melancholy,
Jealous glancing around,
An oaf, an accomplice,
He poisons the ground.

"Out spoke the great mother,
Beholding his fear;—
At the sound of her accents
Cold shuddered the sphere:—
'Who has drugged my boy's cup?
Who has mixed my boy's bread?
Who, with sadness and madness,
Has turned my child's head?'"

I heard a poet answer
Aloud and cheerfully,
"Say on, sweet Sphinx! thy dirges
Are pleasant songs to me.
Deep love lieth under
These pictures of time;
They fade in the light of
Their meaning sublime.

"The fiend that man harries
Is love of the Best;
Yawns the pit of the Dragon,
Lit by rays from the Blest.

The Lethe of Nature
  Can't trance him again,
Whose soul sees the perfect,
  Which his eyes seek in vain.

"To vision profounder,
  Man's spirit must dive;
His aye-rolling orb
  At no goal will arrive;
The heavens that now draw him
  With sweetness untold,
Once found, — for new heavens
  He spurneth the old.

"Pride ruined the angels,
  Their shame them restores;
Lurks the joy that is sweetest
  In stings of remorse.
Have I a lover
  Who is noble and free? —
I would he were nobler
  Than to love me.

"Eterne alternation
  Now follows, now flies;
And under pain, pleasure, —
  Under pleasure, pain lies.
Love works at the centre,
  Heart-heaving alway;
Forth speed the strong pulses
  To the borders of day.

"Dull Sphinx, Jove keep thy five wits;
  Thy sight is growing blear;
Rue, myrrh and cummin for the Sphinx,
  Her muddy eyes to clear!"

The old Sphinx bit her thick lip, —
  Said, "Who taught thee me to name?
I am thy spirit, yoke-fellow,
  Of thine eye I am eyebeam.

"Thou art the unanswered question;
  Couldst see thy proper eye,
Alway it asketh, asketh;
  And each answer is a lie.
So take thy quest through nature,
  It through thousand natures ply:
Ask on, thou clothed eternity;
  Time is the false reply."

Uprose the merry Sphinx,
  And crouched no more in stone;
She melted into purple cloud,
  She silvered in the moon;
She spired into a yellow flame;
  She flowered in blossoms red;
She flowed into a foaming wave;
  She stood Monadnoc's head.

Through a thousand voices
  Spoke the universal dame;
"Who telleth one of my meanings,
  Is master of all I am."

Write the thought of the poem in your own language. If you do this carefully, you will answer many of the questions that follow. What is the significance of the Sphinx? What riddle does she ask? What contrast is drawn between inanimate nature and man? What question does the poet answer? What answer does he give? What is the reply of the Sphinx? Explain lines 13–16. Explain lines 29 and 30. Give a celebrated passage from Alexander Pope corresponding to the thought of the eleventh stanza. Have you

come across the same thought elsewhere in your reading? Give the meaning of *Dædalian, Lethe, primordial, oaf, dirges, harries, eterne.* Select the strongest figure. Select a passage. Why do you prefer the one you have selected?

## THE HUMBLE-BEE.

Burley, dozing humble-bee,
Where thou art is clime for me.
Let them sail for Porto Rique,
Far-off heats through seas to seek;
I will follow thee alone,
Thou animated torrid-zone!
Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,
Let me chase thy waving lines;
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,
Singing over shrubs and vines.

Insect lover of the sun,
Joy of thy dominion!
Sailor of the atmosphere;
Swimmer through the waves of air;
Voyager of light and noon;
Epicurean of June;
Wait, I prithee, till I come
Within earshot of thy hum,—
All without is martyrdom.

When the south wind, in May days,
With a net of shining haze
Silvers the horizon wall,
And with softness touching all,
Tints the human countenance
With a color of romance,
And infusing subtle heats,
Turns the sod to violets,

Thou, in sunny solitudes,
Rover of the underwoods,
The green silence doth displace
With thy mellow, breezy bass.

Hot midsummer's petted crone,
Sweet to me thy drowsy tone
Tells of countless sunny hours,
Long days, and solid banks of flowers;
Of gulfs of sweetness without bound
In Indian wildernesses found;
Of Syrian peace, immortal leisure,
Firmest cheer, and bird-like pleasure.

Aught unsavory or unclean
Hath my insect never seen;
But violets and bilberry bells,
Maple-sap and daffodels,
Grass with green flag half-mast high,
Succory to match the sky,
Columbine with horn of honey,
Scented fern, and agrimony,
Clover, catchfly, adder's-tongue
And brier-roses, dwelt among;
All beside was unknown waste,
All was picture as he passed.

Wiser far than human seer,
Yellow-breeched philosopher!
Seeing only what is fair,
Sipping only what is sweet,
Thou dost mock at fate and care,
Leave the chaff, and take the wheat.
When the fierce northwestern blast
Cools sea and land so far and fast,
Thou already slumberest deep;

Woe and want thou canst outsleep;
Want and woe, which torture us,
Thy sleep makes ridiculous.

In what ways does the poet describe the hum of the bee? How does he describe its flight? Why does he speak of him as "Thou animated torrid-zone"? What kind of a life does the bee lead? What kind of a philosopher does the poet make of the bee?

## THE SNOW-STORM.

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and at the gate
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art

To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

Compare it with Bryant's "The First Snow-Shower," with Whittier's "Snow-Bound," Lowell's winter in "The Vision of Sir Launfal."

### CONCORD HYMN:

SUNG AT THE COMPLETION OF THE BATTLE MONUMENT, APRIL 19, 1836.

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

Give the history of the event this hymn commemorates. Select the most striking lines in the hymn. Why are they so significant?

### THE TITMOUSE.

You shall not be overbold
When you deal with Arctic cold,
As late I found my lukewarm blood
Chilled wading in the snow-choked wood.

How should I fight? my foeman fine
Has million arms to one of mine:
East, west, for aid I looked in vain,
East, west, north, south, are his domain.
Miles off, three dangerous miles, is home;
Must borrow his winds who there would come.
Up and away for life! be fleet! —
The frost-king ties my fumbling feet,
Sings in my ears, my hands are stones,
Curdles the blood to the marble bones,
Tugs at the heart-strings, numbs the sense,
And hems in life with narrowing fence.
Well, in this broad bed lie and sleep, —
The punctual stars will vigil keep, —
Embalmed by purifying cold;
The winds shall sing their dead-march old,
The snow is no ignoble shroud,
The moon thy mourner, and the cloud.

Softly, — but this way fate was pointing,
'Twas coming fast to such anointing,
When piped a tiny voice hard by,
Gay and polite, a cheerful cry,
*Chic-chicadeedee!* saucy note
Out of sound heart and merry throat,
As if it said, "Good day, good sir!
Fine afternoon, old passenger!
Happy to meet you in these places,
Where January brings few faces."

This poet, though he live apart,
Moved by his hospitable heart,
Sped, when I passed his sylvan fort,
To do the honors of his court,
As fits a feathered lord of land;
Flew near, with soft wing grazed my hand,

Hopped on the bough, then, darting low,
Prints his small impress on the snow,
Shows feats of his gymnastic play,
Head downward, clinging to the spray.

Here was this atom in full breath,
Hurling defiance at vast death;
This scrap of valor just for play
Fronts the north-wind in waistcoat gray,
As if to shame my weak behavior;
I greeted loud my little savior,
You pet! what dost here? and what for?
In these woods, thy small Labrador,
At this pinch, wee San Salvador!
What fire burns in that little chest
So frolic, stout and self-possest?
Henceforth I wear no stripe but thine;
Ashes and jet all hues outshine.
Why are not diamonds black and gray,
To ape thy dare-devil array?
And I affirm, the spacious North
Exists to draw thy virtue forth.
I think no virtue goes with size;
The reason of all cowardice
Is, that men are overgrown,
And, to be valiant, must come down
To the titmouse dimension.

'Tis good-will makes intelligence,
And I began to catch the sense
Of my bird's song: "Live out of doors
In the great woods, on prairie floors.
I dine in the sun; when he sinks in the sea,
I too have a hole in a hollow tree;
And I like less when Summer beats
With stifling beams on these retreats,
Than noontide twilights which snow makes

With tempest of the blinding flakes.
For well the soul, if stout within,
Can arm impregnably the skin;
And polar frost my frame defied,
Made of the air that blows outside."

With glad remembrance of my debt,
I homeward turn; farewell, my pet!
When here again thy pilgrim comes,
He shall bring store of seeds and crumbs.
Doubt not, so long as earth has bread,
Thou first and foremost shalt be fed;
The Providence that is most large
Takes hearts like thine in special charge,
Helps who for their own need are strong,
And the sky doats on cheerful song.
Henceforth I prize thy wiry chant
O'er all that mass and minster vaunt;
For men mis-hear thy call in Spring,
As 'twould accost some frivolous wing,
Crying out of the hazel copse, *Phe-be!*
And, in winter, *Chic-a-dee-dee!*
I think old Cæsar must have heard
In northern Gaul my dauntless bird,
And, echoed in some frosty wold,
Borrowed thy battle-numbers bold.
And I will write our annals new,
And thank thee for a better clew,
I, who dreamed not when I came here
To find the antidote of fear,
Now hear thee say in Roman key,
*Pæan! Veni, vidi, vici.*

Explain the figures in 5 and 6. Explain lines 12–16. Give the special features of the grave in the snow. Repeat the passages purely descriptive of the titmouse. Do they seem to you to be accurate? What philosophy does he connect with it?

**General.** — Read the fragments on the poet and the poet's aim in the appendix (edition of 1888). Read "Merlin" and "The Harp." What notions do you get of his opinion of poetry in general and of his own in particular? As you read and study his poetry, keep these opinions in mind, and see if his practice conforms to his theories. Look over the titles of his poems, see that you know the meanings of the words. What is the subject of the longest poem? Is it confined to simple description, and the record of observations? Does the author seem to delight in nature for its own sake? Read "Monadnoc." Is the treatment descriptive or symbolic? "Berrying" suggests idyllic treatment; is the subject so treated here? Do you find simple, idyllic treatment anywhere? What are his patriotic lyrics? Do you find lyrics of the affections? Of love? Do you find narrative poems? Does emotion or intellect predominate in his work? Is he a logician? Does he use argument? Is he a metaphysician? Is he a naturalist? If none of these terms fitly characterize him, why not, in each case? What term does? Is he a realist or an idealist? Is he optimistic or pessimistic? Do you think he will ever become a popular poet? Why? Is his verse correct technically? Is it melodious and sensuous? Is it poetic? On what ground?

**Amos Bronson Alcott** (1799–1887) was born in Connecticut, and his appetite for learning developed early. Unlike Emerson, his self-consciousness was strongly marked, and he was always readier to discourse than to give ear. There was a solid physical basis to his nature, and his temperament inclined him in a direction opposite to that enjoined by his intellectual and moral faculties. What a phrenologist would call reverence, ideality and self-esteem, were all emphasized in his character. He was earnest, solemn and persistent: he was deeply devoted to benevolent and philanthropic schemes, but was devoid of practical capacity. His temper was easily roused, but his powers of self-control enabled him quickly to subdue its manifestation. There was nothing original in Mr. Alcott: his life was almost totally barren of incident, and his contributions to litera-

**A disciple of Emerson's.**

ture are mostly of no importance. Like Margaret Fuller, he had some contemporary celebrity as a conversationalist, or monologuist: he was a figure in the group that surrounded Emerson, and he was identified with unfamiliar notions as to the education of children, diet and the conduct of life. The dearth of any traces of wit or humor in his composition (both of which Emerson possessed in a marked degree, though of a peculiar kind) produced, at times, an effect of stupidity, not incompatible with strong intelligence in many ways. He regarded himself, and was regarded by his friends, as an example of the moral virtues, and a pattern of what a wise and upright man should be. His demeanor was placid, confident and kindly, his movements and bearing awkward, his voice nasal but strong. He owed much to his environment.

In 1833, we find him in Boston, diligently studying Plato and the Bible, and finding a likeness between them. Aristotle and Bacon were also early masters of his; he was attacking philosophy on its material side, and striving thereby, with little success, to evolve a consistent theory of the universe. An impetus towards the spiritual was communicated to him by Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria," and his acquaintance, soon after, with Emerson and other enlightened persons, kept his face turned thenceforward in that direction. In 1834, he opened his "Temple School" in the Masonic Temple Building in Boston. He proceeded upon a new plan, one feature of which is said to have been that of punishing refractory pupils by administering punishment upon himself in their presence. This method seems not always to have had the effect that was intended: and the publication of his "Conversations on the Gospels" as held in the school, aroused much hostile criticism in the newspapers and elsewhere. He was defended by Emerson in the Boston "Courier," but, in 1837, at Emerson's advice, he gave up the instruction of the young, and turned his attention to the mental and moral improvement of children of a larger growth.

"The Dial," a quarterly journal, was started in 1840. It was the chief result of the meetings of a club or circle called "The Symposium," which was formed in 1836, and was maintained till

1839. The members of the club — upon whom was soon bestowed the nickname of "Transcendentalists" — were Emerson, Channing, Ripley, Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, Miss Elizabeth P. Peabody, George Bancroft, Dr. Hedge, C. P. Cranch, Sam. G. Ward, Alcott and several others. They met four times a year, and discussed such topics as American Genius, Pantheism, Mysticism, Personality. The tone of the meetings seems not to have improved, and the club was dissolved by common consent. "The Dial" (which Alcott had the honor of naming) was designed to be a sort of perpetuation in literary form of the best thoughts of the former club members. Margaret Fuller edited the first two numbers, and Emerson the rest; the subscription was three dollars a year, contributions were gratuitous and the magazine was read almost exclusively by the contributors. Each number contained 136 pages, and many of the articles were in verse. Alcott sent to it his "Orphic Sayings," which are not verse, but a species of mystical epigrams in prose, made terse by assiduous filing, and more apt to be obscure than profound. "The Dial" was discontinued in 1843. All its supporters were young people, Alcott being the only one over forty.

**The "Dial."**

Alcott, at Mr. Emerson's suggestion, had moved to Concord in 1839, and was supporting himself by manual labor. In 1842, with money procured by Emerson and others, he went to England, to bring about a union with advanced thinkers in that country. But diplomacy was not among his accomplishments; moreover, he found the English less spiritual-minded than he had anticipated. After a quarrel with Carlyle, who, though a prophet of calamity, was never in sympathy with actual reform, he came home, bringing two recruits with him. He established himself with them at a sort of model farm, called Fruitlands, where he practised theories of diet, eschewing animal food, and subsisting on fruit and such vegetables as grew above the surface of the earth. He remained a vegetarian all his life. He also believed that none but white garments ought to be worn; but he afterwards consented to put on a black coat, and finally was content to have only his shirt white.

Alcott had not the money-making faculty; but he was married, and must live. His friends helped him to establish "Conversations," and in various ways contrived to keep him supplied with the necessaries of life, as a small return for the abundant spiritual treasures which he was always prepared to lavish on them. He had a knack at rustic carpentry, and received commissions to build summer-houses and fences of boughs for Mr. Emerson and other Concord people. He lived in Concord all his long life afterwards, and his venerable face and figure were a part of the town. At the age of eighty-five, he published a little book of "Sonnets and Cansonets" — personal poems to and about some of his many friends. The most valuable part of his works are those comments and criticisms, often just and penetrating, that have reference to Emerson. The latter's lofty originality seems to have sapped the life-blood of the feebler, less unconventional spirits about him, or else, as in the case of Thoreau, drove them to extravagance in the effort to maintain their independence. In Alcott's "Tablets" and "Concord Days" and papers reminiscent of "The Dial" period may be found interesting records — and echoes — of his great friend and spiritual master.

**Henry David Thoreau** (1817–1862) had the initial distinction of being born in Concord, though that village was then nothing but a pretty hamlet, lying between level meadows and low hills, on the banks of a loitering stream. Here, it is true, the first blood of the Revolution had been shed, more than forty years before; but that fact might have lapsed into oblivion had not Emerson's "Hymn," recited on the site of the conflict, in 1836, put a life into the event that is still vigorous.

Henry David Thoreau.

Thoreau was, remotely, of French extraction, and he had a swarthy, Norman cast of features: but his ancestors had

become English before they became American, and the genuine New England farmer blood beat in his veins. Personally, he was odd, in all senses of the term. He was bilious in constitution and in temper, with a disposition somewhat prone to suspicion and jealousy, and defiant, rather than truly independent, in spirit. He had a searching, watchful, unconciliating eye, a long, stealthy tread and an alert but not graceful figure. His heart was neither warm nor large, and he certainly did not share that "enthusiasm for humanity" which was the fashionable profession in his day. His habits were solitary and unsocial; yet secretly he was highly sensitive to the opinion of his fellow-men, and would perhaps have mingled more freely with them, but for a perception that there was no vehement demand for his company. The art of pleasing was not innate in him, and he was too proud to cultivate it. Rather than have it appear that society could do without him, he resolved to make haste and banish society; for a couple of years he actually lived alone in a hut built by himself, on the shores of Walden Pond, near Concord: all his life he kept out of people's way,—you were more apt to see his disappearing coat-tails than his face,—and he was most at ease in his walks through the woods and fields surrounding Concord, and on his exploring tramps to Canada, to Maine, to Cape Cod and along the Merrimac River. Thus thrown back upon himself, his egotism and self-consciousness could not but become emphasized: and since he might not shine in society, he determined to be king in the wilderness. He asserted, and perhaps brought himself to believe, that all that was worthy in this world lay within the compass of a walk from his own doorstep; and we might add that he came to regard the owner of that doorstep as the centre of all this world's worth. Existing in space, as it were, with nothing to measure himself by, he seemed to himself colossal.

**A sensitive recluse.**

Had Thoreau been nothing more than has been indicated, the world would not have been likely to hear of him. But there was more in him than this, and more still was added by education and by the influence of certain of his contemporaries, and of their

opinions. His father was able to send him to school and to Harvard College: after graduating he taught school, and finally learned surveying. This trade, and a little money that he had, sufficed to support one of habits so economical as his. He was endowed with some imagination, and it partly found expression in poetry — moralized descriptions of nature, a little rough in form, and anything but ardent in feeling, but individual and masculine. Several of these poems, written soon after Thoreau left college, were published in "The Dial," and also some essays on the natural history of Massachusetts. Emerson was the medium of this early literary recognition, and his contact with the odd and whimsical young man who had so few intimates inevitably had an effect upon Thoreau's development, both literary and philosophical. He did not want to imitate anybody, and he did his best to digest Emerson, so that his own work and cast of thought should not betray the contagion. Measurably, but not completely, he succeeded. His writings are thinly overspread with Thoreau, but here and there the coating has worn off, and the Emersonian basis shows through. It is quite open to question whether this has not done the writings more harm than good. The nectar and ambrosia of Emerson does not assimilate kindly with Thoreau's harsh and rather acrid substance. Thoreau was a humorist, — in the old, not in the new sense, — and it is indispensable to the prosperity of the humorist that he be himself. He was no optimist, and he cared nothing for the welfare of mankind, or the progress of civilization. When, therefore, he ornaments his records of the facts of nature with interpretations of their moral and spiritual significance, we feel a sense of incongruity. The interpretations have not the air of developing spontaneously from the interior of the writer's thought; they are deliberately fitted on from the outside, and the marks of juncture smoothed off. On the other hand, it did come naturally to Thoreau to fall into a vein of talking about natural objects — plants, animals and meteorology — as if they were human creatures, and to credit them with likes, dislikes, thoughts and personalities. When he does this, he is entertaining

**Labors to be original.**

and attractive, and it is a pity he did not develop a vein so proper to him, rather than snatch with his earthly hands at the Empyrean.

His poems of observation were good, and, like a pointer-dog, he could fix his gaze upon an object for a long time at a stretch. Nevertheless, he cannot be considered an especially objective writer. He reverts continually to himself, and examines his own attitude and impressions in regard to the thing even more solicitously than the thing itself. The poet in him helps the naturalist, but the philosopher sophisticates him. Now and then, in the midst of the pathless woods, we are aware of a queer bookish flavor in the air. The literary artist arranges his little scene, pleasing in its way, and well done; only it was not just the kind of pleasure we were looking for. Other and greater artists can do that better: what we want of Thoreau is his own peculiar service, and nothing else.

**Himself his first study.**

In truth, he was not free from affectations; he was radically provincial; and often (as children complain of one another) he was "disagreeable." But he had deep and true thoughts, he was of pure and upright life and he made a real and lasting impression. He deserves the reputation that he has with the average reader, though not the violent panegyrics of his thick-and-thin admirers. He assumed the stoicism and some of the habits of the Indian, and his physical senses were approximately as acute as theirs; but he was really a civilized man who never found a home in civilization. One leaves him with a feeling of unmixed kindliness; and in his "Walden," his "Week on the Concord and Merrimac," his "Cape Cod" and other books, will be found many passages worthy of preservation, which only he could have written.

**Margaret Fuller Ossoli** (1810–1850). It was not so easy, nor so common, for a woman to render herself conspicuous before 1850, as it has become since then. But Margaret Fuller accomplished the feat, and did it without the aid of the most effective weapon in woman's arsenal — personal beauty. From her early years, she had the determination to be noticed; but her father, observing a tendency on her part to decorate her person, pointed

out to her that she could never hope to succeed on the basis of physical attractions, or by recognized feminine devices: but he added that she possessed brains, and if she used them aright, a career might yet await her.

With the shrewd sense that was her most useful characteristic, Margaret heeded this wise advice, and heroically resolved to veil her plainness with her cleverness. She was not without good grounds for hope of success. Confidence and self-esteem she possessed in abundance. Her strong animal nature gave her energy and persistence; she had a flow of amusing though not always good-natured wit; taste, but not tact; a capacious and retentive memory, and a certain intellectual passion, which enabled her, when warm, to say and do striking and sometimes audacious things. There was a good deal of feminine finesse in her composition, and much hardihood of character, so that it was not easy to deny her what she sought: she cared nothing for hostility to her opinions, or for attacks upon herself, provided only her vanity was not affronted. If she suffered from the disadvantages, she also profited by the advantages of being a pioneer in the line she had chosen. People were so much surprised by her unprecedented attitude, so amused at her wit and so disheartened by her display of information, that they yielded to her at discretion, and then, to account for their subjection, encouraged themselves to see in her all that she claimed for herself. The stronger minds among them, detecting the woman who, after all, was behind this bold and brilliant demonstration, felt a kindly sympathy for her gallant effort, lent her their countenance and support and grew to feel for her the kind of affection that we are apt to bestow upon our own discoveries and protégés.

**Her character.**

In looking over the field, Margaret had not failed to note the new departure towards culture, Germanism, Transcendental Philosophy and Humanitarianism. Here, then, must be her arena, and with indomitable energy she set to work to master all these things, and become not merely an associate but a leader in them all. The result stands

**Her acquisitions.**

as one of the triumphs of perseverance and ambition. She is an eminent example of how acquisitions may be substituted for innate gifts, and even be mistaken for them. For her accomplishments were not a natural and irresistible flowering-out from within, as in Emerson's case, but a deliberate and calculated plastering-on from without; the interior being was left much in its original condition. None of her learning penetrated further than the sphere of the memory; and though she used it, with considerable skill, for her own advancement, it could not be made to penetrate beneath the memory of her audience. But she gained their applause and sometimes even their awe; and though she always betrayed a restlessness, not generally associated with serenity and satisfaction of soul, she had won the only kind of success that could be expected.

When "The Dial" was begun, she was its first editor, with a salary of two hundred dollars a year. The magazine came into existence as a reaction against the prevailing stagnation of the religious and philosophical atmosphere: but its contributors being unpaid, could not afford to give it their best work: many of their lucubrations were published in a crude and undigested state, and gave the impression of being hurried compilations from miscellaneous reading, largely from German authors. Nevertheless, some of the best work of Emerson and of Thoreau appeared first in its pages; and Margaret published in it the earliest version of her essay on "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," on which her reputation as a writer rests. It is clever, strenuous and bold: it is lacking in delicacy, and the style is sometimes turgid. But there is more native force in it than in any of her other productions.

**Her connection with the "Dial."**

Margaret had made a conquest of Emerson, and he became one of her stanchest supporters, though he admits that he entered into the acquaintance reluctantly, distrusting her "sharp personality," and her "intense times." At first, he says, "she made me laugh more than I liked," and he found in her too much of the sibyl, and "a rather mountainous Me." But she saw the necessity of securing him, and held on till he succumbed. "Your

people shall be my people," she declared, "and yonder darling boy" — Emerson's son Waldo — "I shall cherish as my own." She quartered herself in his home for months at a time, and made capital out of the intimacy. When, two years after her death, her biography was published, Emerson loyally maintained her cause in it. He spoke of her ready sympathies, and said that she had related herself to all the art, thought and nobleness of New England. She lived much of her time in the houses of her various friends, giving them, in return for their hospitality, "wit, anecdote, love-stories, tragedies, oracles." And he adds, "She seemed like the queen of some parliament of love, who carried the key to all confidences, and to whom every question had been finally referred."

**Emerson's relation to her.**

Her work on the New York "Tribune," and her "Conversations," held in Boston, occupied her during the next few years. She was always a hard and faithful worker, giving the best she had, and was honestly anxious to excel. As a young woman, she had taught school, supporting herself and other members of her family with the proceeds. In 1846, she sailed for Europe, and went to Italy, in whose political affairs she had conceived a vehement interest. Here, to the surprise of her friends, she married an Italian nobleman, much younger than herself, the Marquis Ossoli; and after the birth of a boy, in 1848, the parents decided to make their home in America. They set sail in 1850; the vessel was wrecked off Fire Island Light, on the Long Island coast, and all were drowned. Margaret was barely forty years of age. Few women, in so short a life, have done so much as she; and the tragic close of her career invests it with a pathetic dignity.

**Later years.**

**William Ellery Channing** (1780–1842). The reaction against Calvinism began before the Revolution, with the heretical sermons of the Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, of Boston: and Paine's "Age of Reason" had also caused certain clergymen to bear lightly on the darker features

**A champion of Unitarianism.**

of the creed. Their discourses were devoted to inculcating moral duties more than to developing the scheme of salvation. At length, however, what was called Unitarianism avouched itself as a definite departure from the old lines; and William Ellery Channing was its most conspicuous champion.

Speaking broadly, war was declared between human institutions and nature. The emancipating influence of Swedenborg was felt on the religious side; in literature, criticism analyzed many prejudices; and the advance of science modified the general point of view. Men like Lavater, Gall and Spurzheim ransacked the mysteries of humanity, and Goethe's severe but searching philosophy contributed much towards the intellectual revolution.

Channing was a Harvard graduate, born in Newport, Rhode Island; was a precocious and able student, but delicate in physical health. In 1803, he was already a minister of the Gospel, and in a few years gained a reputation for eloquence in the pulpit unequalled in his day and place. He was an authority on political and literary as well as on religious questions; his essay on Napoleon Bonaparte attracted attention abroad, and that on Milton added to his reputation. He was in intellectual sympathy with Wordsworth and Coleridge, relying, like them, on the essential dignity of human nature, and inclining to deny any intermediation between man's soul and its Creator. Reason, he held, was adequate to apprehend God; and the moral instincts we find in ourselves give us the measure of the Divine nature. The highest human state, he thought, was that in which the sense of duty is forgotten in the spontaneous fervor of love. Calvinism, he declared, degraded man's nature, and was abhorrent to our Divine intuitions.

Channing overflowed with a joyous and hopeful piety; he painted in enchanting colors the delights of heavenly-mindedness, and inculcated the idea that God was ready to bless and receive, not the elect only, but every one who should come to Him in faith and charity. His enthusiasm was contagious, and his followers were many; yet he spoke from theory rather than from actual knowledge of men, whom he credited with a nature already regenerate. Nor did he see the logical conclusions to which

his doctrines might be carried. They could be used to show that Christ was but a man of uncommon genius, and that the Bible was not the revealed Word of God, since God revealed himself directly to his creatures. He failed to realize that as soon as individual conscience is made the measure of the Almighty, the foundations of all religion are in danger.

His teachings were supplemented by those of Andrews Norton, who attempted to prove, by reference to Holy Writ, that Calvinism falsified its true intention. **Norton** (1786–1853) was a profound Biblical scholar, and his arguments, though lacking in Channing's fervor, were lucid and convincing. He criticised the doctrine of the Trinity, but wrote an elaborate treatise in support of the genuineness of the Gospels. While Norton and Channing were preaching and writing to this effect in Boston, **Orville Dewey** (1795–1882) was doing a similar work in New York.

The secession thus begun was carried on, and carried further, by several vigorous minds. We have seen what course Emerson steered; and **Theodore Parker** (1810–1860), a great fighter and an indomitable controversialist, immensely in earnest and winning, ended by seceding even from the seceders, and establishing a church and sect of his own. His "Lessons from the World of Matter and the World of Man," and his "Historic Americans" are still read; and during his lifetime no man's followers were more ardent than his. A more profound and weighty writer was **Horace Bushnell** (1802–1876), whose many books have as yet lost little of their value, and whose "Moral Uses of Dark Things" should be studied by every student. Other names still fresh in the memory are John Weiss and Henry Ward Beecher, Mark Hopkins, John Fiske, and W. T. Harris. The latter, born in 1835, has of late years lived in Concord. He has studied and digested all philosophies, from Aristotle to Emerson, and wherever the new light is brightest and clearest, he is to be found. He edited the "Journal of Speculative Philosophy," and he himself constructed an "Outline of Philosophy," which seems to embody most of the sound features of previous systems, and to eliminate their errors. **Jones Very** (1813–1880) was a sort of

slender American shadow of William Blake, with the masculine strength and the painter's genius left out; he was a mystic and a spiritist, and wrote some deep and delicate little poems under what he believed to be direct spirit guidance. Finally, **Henry James**, Sr. (1811–1882), the father of the novelist, may be regarded — though his first substantial volume bears date 1863 — as a writer who belongs to the future rather than to the present. His principal books, — "Substance and Shadow," "The Secret of Swedenborg," and "Society the Redeemed Form of Man," — written in a style which, for wit and humor, vigor, elevation, and rich, homely flavor, has never been surpassed, treat of the largest problems of man and his destiny. Their point of view is radically novel, and yet affirms views of the relations between Creator and creature which are in some senses far more orthodox than those of the Unitarian dissenters. The validity of the Divine Incarnation is especially insisted on, and a light is thrown upon its esoteric significance, concerning the bearing of which upon future religious philosophizing it is still too early to pass an opinion. Mr. James's writings are, at all events, one of the later and most powerful products of that spiritual quickening which has done so much to ally religion with literature.

## VIII.

## NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

MEN and women cannot be nourished on abstractions. Theories and philosophical speculations are artificial things. There is no thought apart from the person thinking, and no rule of life distinct from the person by whom it is obeyed. In actual experience there is no knowledge, nor any knowing person, unless there is a thing for that person to know. Logicians call the person knowing, the subject of knowledge; and the thing known, the object of knowledge; and (for convenience of reasoning and analyzing) they separate the one from the other, and consider them separately. But in reality the object known creates the subject knowing: and if the object is taken away, the subject (so far as that object is concerned) ceases to exist. You know a flower, so long as the flower is there; but if it is not there, neither are you there to know it.

**A metaphysical distinction.**

Object and subject, then, are one by the fact of their mutual relation; and to separate them in thought is an arbitrary and unreal expedient. There can be no principles save as illustrated by human beings; therefore to gain a living understanding of principles we must study not the principles in the abstract, but the human beings themselves. Men like Fourier, Emerson and Channing had been dealing in abstractions. But abstractions are dead: to make them live they must be restored to the sphere of concrete human experience from which they were abstracted. The mass of people have not creative imagination, and, until they are shown principles in practical operation, they are mere words to them.

For more than thirty years America had been listening to theorists and philosophers, who stated their propositions and

demonstrated them by logic, and even got the truth of their demonstrations admitted. But this having been done, nothing seemed to follow. Creation had been explained, error had been exposed, remedies advocated; and yet earth, man and heaven remained unaltered. People went about their affairs as if all this learning, ingenuity and eloquence were no more than the declaiming of actors in a play. These were fine, exhilarating sentiments that they had heard; but, personally and practically, they did not know what to do with them. What is one to do with an abstraction?

No truth is wasted: but its usefulness must remain in abeyance until it has been applied to life. Man cannot be nourished through his intellect alone. His feelings must be aroused — his sympathies, aversions, loves and fears. He must be led to think of himself as involved, actively and ardently, in the working out of ideas. He must be shown, not a mathematical diagram, but a picture, with all the warmth and color of life. He must see human figures, hear their voices, and witness their joys and griefs. His heart must beat in response to theirs; he must feel their presence and share their emotions. He must know their names, faces and habits, and enter into their existence as his own. A genius was needed to interpret life from within, instead of any longer dissecting its divorced parts. This genius appeared in Nathaniel Hawthorne.

**Reason does not express all of life.**

He had nothing to do with abstractions. Man, living in his natural environment, was the game he hunted. Philosophy, as distinct from persons, had no interest for him. He turned human beings into philosophy, and he turned philosophy into human beings. He neither ignored the spirit of things in painting the outside, nor did he neglect the outside in order to exploit the spirit. He did not even penetrate through the surface to the interior; but he entered by sympathy into the being he was studying, looked out through his eyes, felt his circumstances, performed his actions and thought his thoughts, and thus livingly and completely interpreted him. He was no vivisector of humanity, as has been asserted, nor did

**Hawthorne's field.**

he ever violate its sanctities; but, because he profoundly comprehended it, he treated it with tenderness and reverence.

The books he wrote differ in character from what had been called novels; nor did they more resemble the conventional romance. Their author called them romances; but he added a definition of romance which had never before been made. In fact, the books are unique in kind. Neither before nor since their appearance have any other books been written which can be classed with them either in point of execution or conception. They comprehend the sphere of thought belonging to the period we have been discussing; they incarnate this thought in humanity, and they transfigure the incarnation by art.

**Nathaniel Hawthorne** (1804–1864) was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on the Fourth of July. His immediate ancestors were seafaring men, trading with the East Indies. An uncle had commanded a privateer in the Revolution. A more remote progenitor was a judge, and had been concerned in the trials of the witches in the seventeenth century. Others had commanded troops against the Indians. The race had the characteristics of the Puritans, and were held to be even more stern and unconciliating than the average of their kind. **Ancestry.**

Nathaniel's mother was a woman of beauty, dignity, and unusual intellect. He more resembled her than his father, who died when he was a child. His mother retired from society and became a recluse in her own house. The boy was educated under the superintendence of his maternal uncle, but was not an assiduous student. He liked desultory reading, out-door play, hunting and skating. He had an arch love of mischief, a consciousness of power, and a healthy independence of character. He was never in a hurry, and took life easily and with enjoyment. He showed signs of an active imagination, objective and wholesome. Personally he was a finely-built, athletic and very handsome boy, and strength and beauty characterized him through life. He never suffered from illness. **Boyhood.**

His uncle owned an estate at Raymond, in Maine, on the bor-

ders of Sebago Lake, and surrounded by the primeval forest. He spent some years there, tracking bear, shooting small game, and boating or skating on the lake. Fitting himself leisurely for college, he entered Bowdoin in 1821. He showed himself a good Latin and Greek scholar, but neither sought nor obtained high rank. After taking his degree, he returned to Salem, and lived there with his mother and his two sisters for twelve years. None of the family either went into or received society. Young Hawthorne had a social and friendly nature, but he did not depend on others for his happiness, and, living thus, the habit of solitude and seclusion grew on him. From the age of twenty-one to thirty-three, he may be said to have been practically without a companion in the world. As regards his genius, it was the most important period of his life.

Once in a while, he would make a solitary excursion into the New Hampshire hills, or, going further north, would spend a week or two with his friend Bridge, a classmate, and the only man with whom he stood on a footing approaching intimacy. He read a good deal, meditated more than he read, and wrote somewhat.

**Early authorship.**

Most of what he wrote, he burnt; some articles appeared in periodicals, but seldom over his own signature. No one seemed to read them, and no one seemed to know that he wrote them. At length a young lady living a few doors from him identified him as the author of a sketch called "The Gentle Boy," and this was the means of his being seen again in the world, after so long a retirement. A few years later he became engaged to the sister of the lady who had drawn him from his seclusion; and after he had made experiment (with unfavorable results) of the new Brook Farm Community, he married Miss Sophia Peabody, and they went to live in the Old Manse, at Concord.

From 1842 to 1853, Hawthorne was supported partly by writing, and partly as surveyor in the Salem Custom House. In 1850 he wrote the "Scarlet Letter." The "House of the Seven Gables," "The Blithedale Romance," "The Wonder Book," and "Tanglewood Tales," all appeared, successively, during the next three

years. He had published, before 1850, four volumes of short sketches, called "Twice-Told Tales" and "Mosses from an Old Manse," besides some historical and biographical sketches for children, under the title of "Grandfather's Chair"; and "The Snow Image, and Other Stories." In 1853, Franklin Pierce, the new president, a college friend of Hawthorne (who had written a campaign biography of him), appointed him consul at Liverpool, England. He took his family thither: shortly before his term of office expired, he resigned it, and visited France and Italy. He returned to England to spend the winter of 1859, and to write his "Marble Faun." The following summer he returned to America, and took up his residence on a little estate he had purchased before leaving home, — The Wayside, in Concord. Here he worked on a new romance; but his health had begun to fail, and the Civil War disturbed his mind. He gave up the romance, but published a volume of sketches of his English experience (which he had designed to use as the background and side-scenes of the story) under the title of "Our Old Home." Shortly after, he once more took up the romance, under a new conception, and two instalments of it were printed in the "Atlantic Monthly Magazine." He died suddenly, on May 19, 1864, while on a journey to New Hampshire in search of health with his friend Franklin Pierce. After his death were published "Septimius, a Romance," "American Note-Books," "English Note-Books," "French and Italian Note-Books," and "Doctor Grimshawe's Secret," a romance. The "Septimius" and the "Grimshawe" were the abortive studies that he had written, but had not prepared for the press, on his return from England. To them may be added the chapters of "The Dolliver Romance" that appeared in the "Atlantic Monthly."

**Literary history.**

"The Old Manse."

This career has little to recommend it in the way of adventure

or vicissitude: but, such as it is, it is the outward biography of the greatest of American men of letters. His mental and spiritual history is more interesting; and to study it we must have recourse to his own writings. He sometimes alludes to himself, in a semi-impersonal way, in the prefaces to his books; but, as he remarks, "these things hide the man, instead of displaying him. You must make quite another kind of inquest, and look through the range of his fictitious characters, in order to detect any of his essential traits."

In the "Ambitious Guest," one of his earlier stories, we find this allusion to the hero of the tale, in which Hawthorne is evidently speaking of himself: "A glory was to beam upon his pathway, though not, perhaps, while he was treading it. But posterity should confess that a gifted one had passed from the cradle to the tomb, with none to recognize him." There we have a glimpse of one of his moods during that long, solitary vigil of twelve years in Salem. Elsewhere, still speaking of himself under the guise of an imaginary character, he refers to the lack of sympathy and understanding with which his essays in literature were met by his fellow townspeople. He was "ranked with tavern hunters, and town paupers, and the drunken poets who hawked their ballads in the streets": he had no readers, still less any critics, and no materials but thin air to concoct his stories of. "I used to think," he remarked long afterwards, "that I could imagine all feelings and passions; but how little I knew!" He began to fear lest the habit of seclusion should so grow upon him that he would never be able to escape from it. "An influence beyond our control," he says in "Wakefield," "lays its strong hand on every deed we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity. Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever."

**Autobiographical.**

But this period of retirement was doubtless of lasting value in developing his genius. Like the young champions of mediæval

times, on the eve of knighthood, he was shut up alone, to watch and pray beside his armor. Only a powerful and finely balanced organization could have endured the strain, and emerged the stronger for it. "Was there ever such a delay in obtaining recognition?" he exclaims. "I sat down by the wayside of life like a man under enchantment. There is no fate in the world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows. I have not lived: I have only dreamed of living." But Providence regards not the individual's comfort, but his uses. For the work Hawthorne had to do, not only his native ability was needed, but the test of banishment to the Wilderness. Meditation would create in him a touchstone of truth, wherewith to search the human heart. When, at length, he emerged, it was with strange powers and gifts. "Angels seemed to have sat with him at the fireside," he says, in "The Great Stone Face," "and he had imbibed the sublimity of their ideas, and imbued it with the sweet and lowly charm of household words." He had the wise instinct not to hasten his development. He would not pull up the seeds in his mental garden, to see how they were growing. His power to be patient equalled his need of patience. Nor was he ever extravagant: for he had both profound humor and sterling common sense. "The great, round, solid earth" he was so fond of is ever under his feet: he recognized the vastness of the creative plan: he took his stand at the centre of things: and the genesis of his most airy vagaries can always be traced to some settled basis of fact or truth.

**A period of brooding.**

At first, he intimates, "I immensely underrated the difficulties of my trade; but now I recognized that it demanded nothing short of my whole powers." He was not only his own sole critic, but also the severest that ever sat in judgment on him. For his twelve years' work, he had to show only some forty-five short sketches: the rest he had burnt unprinted. The practical side of his nature kept the imaginative side in check; and this self-poise it was that enabled him to write "Hawthornesque" romance, which, "while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws," and "while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the

human heart, has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation." But, in pruning, he strengthened his imagination, until he could see through the changing and turbulent shows of things to the serene and permanent realities underneath. At the age of twenty-seven, we may suppose him to have mastered his art. Thenceforward he could do anything in it that he wished.

It may have been that he did not, originally, intend to devote himself exclusively to works of imagination or fiction. But he soon found that he could utter himself fully in no other way. He saw the soul of things, and spoke in tropes. He humanized everything he touched, bringing it into relation with the spirit of man. He could not simply recite bare facts: he must show them colored and solidified by imagination. Moreover, he desired to touch the heart of mankind with his own. He aimed, in his tales, not to approve himself an original thinker, but to establish bonds of sympathy with his fellow-men. To be true, not to be "original," was his resolve: and truth is for its wearer a cloak of invisibility, because of its impersonal quality, and enables him to mingle freely in all societies, seeing, but unseen.

**Fiction his proper instrument.**

Though by training exclusive, Hawthorne was deeply conscious of the universal brotherhood of man. In "The Procession of Life" he considers the various ties which unite men together. Intellectual power "is but a higher development of innate gifts common to all, and will vanish beyond the circle of the present world." But when the trumpet sounds for the Guilty to assemble, "even the purest may be sensible of some faint responding echo in his heart. Many, however, will be astonished at the fatal impulse that drags them thitherward. Nothing is more remarkable than the various deceptions by which guilt conceals itself from the perpetrator's conscience." This point is touched on in other places, as, for instance, in "Fancy's Show-box": "Man must not disclaim his brotherhood even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting

**Notion of universal brotherhood.**

phantoms of iniquity." Again, in "Young Goodman Brown"— "Evil is the nature of mankind": and in "The Minister's Black Veil,"—"I look around me, and lo! on every visage a black veil!"

In "The Hall of Fantasy" Hawthorne passes in review, with a glance half playful and half serious, the whole matter of Reform that was then agitating the country. He saw there the "representatives of an unquiet period, when mankind is seeking to cast off the whole tissue of ancient custom, like a tattered garment." But, through the confusion of their incompatible notions, he perceives that they were "united in one sentiment — the struggle of the race after a better and a purer life than had yet been realized on the earth." And although "truth has an intoxicating quality when imbibed by any save a powerful intellect, and often impels the quaffer to quarrel in his cups," nevertheless, "above them all is the breadth of Providence."

Allied with this theme is the empty nature of many of the accumulations of our present civilization, which are treated of in "Earth's Holocaust"— the great bonfire in which all such superfluities are to be consumed. But while conceding to the reformers that nature may be better than books, and the mind deeper than any system of philosophy, yet he points out that unless the heart be purified, and we go deeper than the intellect, "our whole accomplishment is a dream." But the most sweeping reforms can do no real harm, since "not a truth is destroyed, and only what is evil can feel the action of the fire."

**Reviews of reforms.**

The subject is treated from another point of view in "The New Adam and Eve." Here the circumstances of civilized life are detached from the traditional quality that they have acquired, and are criticised as they are in themselves. The new beings have no comprehension of our machinery for measuring time, for "nature would measure time by the succession of thoughts and acts which constitute our real life." They are perplexed by the church, for "their life thus far has been a constant prayer; purity and simplicity hold converse at every moment with their Creator." Still

less can they fathom the meaning of the prison. Every remedy for the cure of sin had been tried except Love — "the flower that grew in Heaven and was sovereign for all the miseries of earth." Nothing so well as a creative and reverent imagination can loosen the fetters which we mistakenly call truth and reality, and make us sensible what prisoners we are.

Hawthorne's works do not contain much direct discussion of religion. He did not insist on a rational explanation of all mysteries. What is essential, is intuitive. Because for the present the Creator withholds the spiritual perception, we are not to contend that there is no spiritual world. There is a world which will fulfil all the wants of the human soul: and even here, what is good and true becomes fixed, while error melts away and vanishes.

**His religious views.**

The deeper the level at which Hawthorne moves, the more optimistic does he become. His most momentous conclusions are also his most hopeful ones. He is never commonplace, and, on the other hand, is never sensational, but says the thing to which our unprejudiced judgment must agree. And yet no writer in our literature is so revolutionary as Hawthorne. We do not observe it, for the very reason that he is so profound.

Such are some of the hints as to Hawthorne's character and opinions that may be gathered from the volumes preceding the publication of "The Scarlet Letter." We have made use of them more particularly because they are less widely known than are his great romances, and also cover a wider field. Beautiful as stories though his early pieces are, the story in them was never his chief object. They are wrought out of the substance of his life, and are alive, depth beyond depth. Nothing but the framework of them is fictitious: their substance is truth: and art is the form that symmetrical truth assumes, and to which imagination gives solidity.

The "Scarlet Letter" was Hawthorne's first complete expression of a single given group of ideas. Like all his longer romances, it has a rich, multifarious life of its own. When an architect builds a temple, it owes its design to him, but all the

rest to nature. Nature made the marble, the earth on which the temple stands, the trees and mountains that are its background, the sun and shade that rest upon its pediment and pillars. In "The Scarlet Letter" the design of the story is a matter of judgment and selection; but the treatment — which belongs to Hawthorne's genius — bears the same relation to the plot that nature bears to the idea of the temple. Even in the choice of a certain one out of several possible aspects of the theme, Hawthorne, however, displays rare wisdom. He declined to tell the story of the enacting of the sin, for that, however interesting from the sensational point of view, was vulgar and commonplace, and involved no spiritual lesson. He perceived that the true importance of the narrative was in the consequences of the sinful act upon the natures of the actors; in the methods adopted by society, and by the husband, to punish it, and in the final solution which the errors of all concerned negatively indicated. Having chosen his field, he proceeded to do his work as only he could have done it.

**The Scarlet Letter.**

Consider, for example, what subtle and impressive use he makes of the scarlet letter itself. To an ordinary writer it might have proved an inconvenience; but to Hawthorne it is a means of conveying impressions too delicate to be put in direct words. He has, indeed, a fondness for such figurative symbols, and employs them always to spiritualize the grossness of the subject, and to transmute its prose to poetry. We feel how the terrible letter burns on Hester's breast; we see it cast a glow along her pathway, and we perceive how, while isolating her in literal fact, it mystically reveals the sympathetic but secret guilt of others. By a ghastly miracle it is revealed on the breast of the minister, Dimmesdale. And at length, to the morbid eye of the transgressor, it appears, drawn in fire, on the face of the sky itself.

**The letter.**

Dimmesdale, Hester and Chillingworth work out their several destinies, and the solution finally reached has the inevitable force of a living experience. But Pearl, Hester's little child, is the

great original creation of the book. She would much have embarrassed the ordinary novelist, but Hawthorne makes her the focus of the drama. She is a unique figure in literature, and so vivid is her vitality, she seems to spring from the page, and become incarnate before our eyes. Pearl is Hester's greatest torture, but she is her blessing and salvation as well. "Make my excuses to him," she says to old Mistress Hibbard, in response to the latter's invitation to meet the Black Man in the forest; "I must tarry at home and keep watch over my little Pearl." The child is like a beautiful but poisonous flower, rejoicing in its poison, and receiving it as the very breath of its life; yet, being a child, and without experience, she is devoid of evil and of good principles alike: she is in the instinctive stage of growth. And as the same pure sunlight vivifies noxious as well as benign forms of existence, so the evil proclivities in Pearl's nature are energized, but not constituted, by the Divine source of her being.

**Pearl.**

In "Rappacini's Daughter," one of Hawthorne's shorter tales, the character of Beatrice presents a problem somewhat similar to Pearl's. The former is nourished upon poisons, until her touch and her breath become a concentration of poison. In both cases, the personal soul stands behind the imported evil, and the question stands, Shall the soul become the victim of its involuntary circumstances? Hawthorne, in both cases, inclines to the brighter alternative. He suggests that although, for inscrutable purposes, God incarnates us in evil, our souls need not therefore suffer destruction. Again, in "The Marble Faun," the last, and perhaps the greatest of Hawthorne's books, we find Miriam involved in the shadow of another's crime. Possessing a strong will, and moral independence, her intellect and her creative imagination are aroused, and she canvasses every aspect of her position, coming to the conclusion that guilt could not rightly be ascribed to her. Nevertheless, under the influence of the shadow, she goes astray; for every crime is made to be the agony of many innocent persons. On the other hand, the criminal act, committed for Miriam's sake, by the faun-like

**The subject in another phase.**

Donatello, kindles him into a man, and the grief and pain that follow develop in him a more definite and nobler individuality.

"The House of the Seven Gables," which followed the "Scarlet Letter," shows how the tendency of families to isolate themselves from the race, and to deny the humane instincts of the universal human brotherhood, results in disaster. It takes two hundred years for the crime which the first Pyncheon committed against the first Maule to work itself off: but at length we see the forces of the general humanity overcome the inevitable consequences of one rampant individuality, that undertook to wield the thunderbolts of Omnipotence against a fellow-mortal. Love, in every pure and unselfish form, undoes the spell that pride and phariseeism had laid upon the house of Pyncheon; and the latest descendants of the two enemies lay asleep the Fury of Retribution by their marriage.

In "The Blithedale Romance," a more familiar form of the opposition between the law of individuality and that of our common nature is considered. The book is founded upon the famous Brook Farm episode, in which were concerned some of the leading minds of New England in 1841. Speculations had been entertained regarding the moral validity of the marriage-contract as at present administered, and as to whether the family were the true and final basis of the State. The story goes to show that by adopting schemes of social organization based on abstractions of individual intellects, we are liable to immolate thereto the hearts of those whom profound affinity and generous imagination have attracted to us. "Tell him he's murdered me!" exclaims Zenobia, speaking of Hollingsworth to Miles Coverdale. No real philanthropy can result from social action that ignores the personal duties of parents, children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, lovers and friends.

**A discussion of the "Brook Farm" experiment.**

But it is not necessary to hunt for theories in the mellow substance of Hawthorne's artistic conceptions. He himself, as we know, had a repugnance to theories, and generally restricted himself to suggestions, knowing how apt is truth to escape from the

narrow limits of a logical deduction. He imagined a moral situation, with characters to fit it, and then permitted the theme to develop in such form as its innate quality directed, enriching its roots and decorating its boughs with the wealth of his experience and meditation. In an ordinary novel of episode, this method would not answer, for there is no innate law of development in such things; they are constructed, but do not grow; and, if the constructive skill be deficient, they prove unsymmetrical. The tree has but to be planted, and wisely watched and pruned, and it will make good its own excuse for being; but the house depends on the builder, for the former, unlike the latter, has its own life and design in it. This is the difference between stories in Hawthorne's vein and all others. He is the most modern of writers; he has divined — what few even yet suspect — the new birth of literature. Hitherto, in fiction, writers have been content to imitate life; but such imitation has been carried as near to perfection as is perhaps possible. The next step is a great one, but — unless we return upon our tracks, and vamp-up afresh the methods of the past — it cannot be shunned. For what lies beyond an imitation of life? — Nothing more nor less than life itself. Doubtless, many will be slow to believe that a work of imagination can be exalted from an imitation of life into life itself. But Shakespeare's plays live, and Hawthorne's romances are alive. A soul is in them: they are conceived on the spiritual plane. The soul, like other souls, assumes a body; but the body exists only because the soul, beforehand, is; and the latter is independent of the former. How this life is to be imparted is another question: the process can be no easy one. He who gives life can have no life save his own to give. It is not a matter of note-books, of observation, of learning, of cleverness. The workshop whence issue works that live is a very interior chamber; and only those who have entered it (perhaps not even they) can reveal its secrets.

**A new birth of Literature.**

The day of dead or galvanized fiction is coming to an end, although, just at present, there is a more than ordinary quantity of cunningly wrought images on hand. The progress of the human

race implies more than electricity and airships would prepare us for. The true conquest of matter by mind, being a religious rather than a scientific transaction, will be felt obscurely and vaguely long before it can be explicitly acknowledged. But whenever the time of acknowledgment comes, credit will be given to Nathaniel Hawthorne.

## IX.

## FROM HAWTHORNE TO BRET HARTE.

DURING several years before and after the Civil War, no new element entered into our literature. Many books, of many kinds, were written; and, viewed as a whole, they show that American writers were maturing in taste, and fully holding the ground they had gained. But no new light broke upon the scene: no symptoms of an original departure were visible. After the intellectual speculations and vagaries of the preceding generation, there ensued, if not a reaction, at least a pause; and the conflict of marching regiments and discharging cannon took the place of warring minds. The Civil War was the symbol and the settlement, on the material plane, of the spiritual unrest of the earlier decades. And after the last gun had been fired, the nation stood still for a while, panting from the struggle, and doubtful what step to take next.

**The Civil War period.**

The leading elder writers polished and perfected themselves on lines already laid down; the others did what they could, but knew not precisely what to do. The present dispute between Realists and Romanticists had not then been invented. Each author followed his own whim, with no thought of literary methods, principles, or progress. Save for half-a-dozen men at the top, there was no money to be made in the profession. There was no criticism to guide, restrain, and stimulate new writers: the very few good critics we had either applied themselves to foreign literature, or to the works of such native authors as had obtained a European reputation. The age of periodicals had scarcely begun, and there was no means of reaching readers except by bound books, which then, and until quite recently, had to compete against cheap stolen goods.

This lethargy brooded over American literature until about

1870, when a young man from the West sent a breath of freshness into the atmosphere. Since then, several new elements have declared themselves; there has been some progress, and much discussion and analysis. If we have as yet found no very great new writer, we at least speculate as to what he ought to do when he arrives. His work lies ready to his hand. Meanwhile we will pass in review the leading features of the generation that is passing away.

**Oliver Wendell Holmes** (1809–1894) was the son of Abiel Holmes, a Harvard pastor and a historian, who was descended from an English barrister. The first emigrant settled in Connecticut. On his mother's side he was derived from Dorothy Quincy, and from the Wendells, who came from Friesland. Oliver graduated from Harvard in 1829, and afterwards studied law and medicine, spending three years abroad in the pursuit of the latter profession. He took his doctor's degree in 1836, and was made professor at Dartmouth three years later. In 1840 he married, and lived in Boston, where all his children were born. He resigned his Dartmouth professorship, and practised as a physician in Boston; in 1847 he became a professor at Harvard. Besides his lectures to students, he became a familiar and popular figure on the lyceum platform. In 1857, "The Atlantic Monthly" was begun, and Holmes contributed to it his "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." Hitherto he had been known as a writer of witty or patriotic poems for occasions: but this prose serial gave him a solid reputation as a humorist, a man of ideas, and a charming writer. In 1859, he published "Elsie Venner," his first novel, or romance; and in 1867, his second, "The Guardian Angel." Meanwhile, during the war, he journeyed to the seat of hostilities to find his son, Captain Holmes, who had been wounded at Ball's Bluff; and the story of this experience was told in the "Atlantic." Medicine, literature, and the labors imposed by his own great popularity, kept him busy until 1884, when he took another trip abroad, after an interval of more than half a century. He was

**Biographical of the "American Laureate."**

welcomed there by thousands of friends whom he had never seen. Returning after three months' sojourn, he settled down to pass his remaining years in the house on Beacon Street, Boston. There has never been a more faithful Bostonian than Holmes. Since 1840 he has lived in that city uninterruptedly, — of itself an achievement of note.

**His temperament.**

Holmes's temperament is mercurial, without being either fickle or shallow. The quickness of his mind gives him wit; and his quick sympathies, both pathos and humor. A harmonious organization renders him capable of good poetry; and an agile and independent intellect has distinguished him in science, and the criticism of life. His intense love of approbation arises not from vanity, but from his desire to be at one with his fellow-men. His enthusiastic patriotism is the outcome of the loyalty of his character, of his devotion to high ideals, and of his unswerving optimism — which last may be credited to his excellent powers of digestion, physical and mental.

**His versatility.**

Holmes has opinions upon a great variety of subjects, and it is his delight to express them, whether in speech, in prose, or in rhyme. He has thought discursively and independently; the results of his thinking tend to formulate themselves in epigrammatic form: relations are pointed out between things apparently remote, there is a constant sparkle of wit, which never descends to buffoonery, and he says a surprising number of what are termed "good things" — a feature in which he has had many imitators, who prove their master's excellence by their own few and partial successes. Some of the effect of Holmes's brilliance is, on the other hand, lost by reason of its frequency: and some of his poorest things are, at a hasty glance, so much like his best, as to give a feeling of uneasiness to the reader. Holmes refreshes commonplaces more often than he creates or discovers; and we are oftener indebted to him for refined amusement than for absolute information. Yet he gives an abundance of both.

The greater part of his writings, outside of his purely scientific essays, is practically the autobiography of his mind and heart.

He wishes to tell all that he feels and thinks, and to be assured that his audience agrees with him. He watches unconscious habits, characteristic traits, and every-day occurrences, and depicts and comments on them with good-humored acuteness, often enhanced by the promulgation of certain shrewd theories of physiological and psychological life, evolved from his own meditations and researches. It is in the current of every-day life that he disports himself most willingly: nothing morbid, far-fetched or singular attracts him, unless he can reconcile it with established laws. In "Elsie Venner," for example, the girl is a sort of human snake: but Holmes does not rest until he has made the phenomenon appear physiologically plausible. "The Guardian Angel" introduces us to another young lady whose psychological eccentricities are reconciled with physiological facts. He always looks for the obvious in the abstruse, and uniformly finds it. Absolute mystery, or the spiritual meaning of material events, has few charms for him. Nevertheless, the best poem he has written — "The Chambered Nautilus" — is a graceful and artistic piece of symbolism. No author of Holmes's calibre has covered a broader range in literature, or has so seldom failed; yet, broad though his range is, he is, himself, not deep. He is many-sided, and touches life at many points; but the touch, though accurate and reasonable, is light — never profound. We are sensible of no spaces in reserve beneath his surface: whatever there is of him we see at once. There are no surprises or problems in his character. He is cheerful, vivacious, kindly, rational, shrewd: with a strong vein of sentiment lying side by side with the keenest sense of the ridiculous. He is not great; but what there is of him is very good, and, if his writings afforded nothing else than pure and wholesome entertainment, they afford so much of that that we owe him a debt.

**Broad, but not deep.**

Holmes's representative poems are "The Constitution," "The Wonderful One-Horse Shay" and "The Chambered Nautilus," — the first illustrating his patriotic style, the next his comic humor and the third his highest plane of sentiment. "The Last Leaf" is also a chief favorite

**Some representative poems.**

among his poems, and perhaps no other piece so good of that kind has been written. A large part of Holmes's verses was written to be read at celebrations, anniversaries and banquets; they are excellent examples of that species of rhymed, witty, sentimental eloquence. Holmes is never dull, except as too constant liveliness dulls the edge of appreciation.

But his most characteristic work is his series of "Autocrat" essays — a narrative, discursive, philosophizing, criticising monologue, which he invented for his own use, and which gives him untrammelled opportunity to say whatever he wishes in his own way: the chapters are lay sermons, delightful to read, which stop just short of being great. The writer has his own way of saying as well as of thinking things; but the method more often than the material is new. He changes the disposition of the furniture of our minds, without changing the furniture itself. He gives a new flavor to our ideas, without opening to us a world of ideas hitherto unexplored. His character-drawing is graphic, and he has a sharp ear for idioms and intonations of speech. He penetrates as far into human nature as common-sense, sympathetic intelligence and apposite learning can take him; and the general result of his disquisitions is to simplify and brighten our conception of men and things.

**The "Autocrat" Series.**

"The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" appeared in 1858, "The Professor at the Breakfast Table" in 1859, and "The Poet at the Breakfast Table" in 1873. Holmes also wrote biographies of Motley and of Emerson; model records of fact and character, but not interpretive or intuitive. Of late years he has contributed to the "Atlantic" other series of papers more or less in the "Autocrat" vein; "Over the Teacups" is the latest. The list of his scientific writings is long and creditable. Holmes writes from external stimulus more than from interior inspiration: to the public rather than to himself; but he is always as good as we expect him to be, and often better.

## SELECTIONS AND EXERCISES.

### OLD IRONSIDES.

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar;—
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more!

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee;—
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea!

O better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,
The lightning and the gale!

What was the occasion of this poem? What effect did it have?

### THE LAST LEAF.

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again

The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom,
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said —
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago —
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer.

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the spring,
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

What is the "Last Leaf"? What has become of his friends? What is the use of the reference to his "grandmamma"? What signs of old age does he bear? Does the poet think himself culpable for making sport of him?

THE COMET.

The Comet! He is on his way,
And singing as he flies;
The whizzing planets shrink before
The spectre of the skies;
Ah! well may regal orbs burn blue,
And satellites turn pale,
Ten million cubic miles of head,
Ten billion leagues of tail!

On, on by whistling spheres of light
He flashes and he flames;
He turns not to the left nor right,
He asks them not their names;
One spurn from his demoniac heel, —
Away, away they fly,
Where darkness might be bottled up
And sold for "Tyrian dye."

And what would happen to the land,
And how would look the sea,
If in the bearded devil's path
Our earth should chance to be?
Full hot and high the sea would boil,
Full red the forests gleam;
Methought I saw and heard it all
In a dyspeptic dream!

I saw a tutor take his tube
The Comet's course to spy;
I heard a scream, — the gathered rays
Had stewed the tutor's eye;
I saw a fort, — the soldiers all
Were armed with goggles green;
Pop cracked the guns! whiz flew the balls!
Bang went the magazine!

I saw a poet dip a scroll
Each moment in a tub,
I read upon the warping back,
"The Dream of Beelzebub";
He could not see his verses burn,
Although his brain was fried,
And ever and anon he bent
To wet them as they dried.

I saw the scalding pitch roll down
The crackling, sweating pines,
And streams of smoke, like water-spouts,
Burst through the rumbling mines;
I asked the firemen why they made
Such noise about the town;
They answered not, — but all the while
The brakes went up and down.

I saw a roasting pullet sit
Upon a baking egg;
I saw a cripple scorch his hand
Extinguishing his leg;
I saw nine geese upon the wing
Towards the frozen pole,
And every mother's gosling fell
Crisped to a crackling coal.

I saw the ox that browsed the grass
Writhe in the blistering rays,
The herbage in his shrinking jaws
Was all a fiery blaze;
I saw huge fishes, boiled to rags,
Bob through the bubbling brine;
And thoughts of supper crossed my soul;
I had been rash at mine.

Strange sights! strange sounds! O fearful dream!
Its memory haunts me still,
The steaming sea, the crimson glare,
That wreathed each wooded hill;
Stranger! if through thy reeling brain
Such midnight visions sweep,
Spare, spare, O, spare thine evening meal,
And sweet shall be thy sleep!

How big is it? Describe its course. What is the disaster that occurs? What effect does it have on the earth? What was the cause of this lurid vision?

LEXINGTON.

Slowly the mist o'er the meadow was creeping,
Bright on the dewy buds glistened the sun,
When from his couch, while his children were sleeping,
Rose the bold rebel and shouldered his gun.

Waving her golden veil
Over the silent dale,
Blithe looked the morning on cottage and spire;
Hushed was his parting sigh,
While from his noble eye
Flashed the last sparkle of liberty's fire.

On the smooth green where the fresh leaf is springing,
Calmly the first-born of glory have met;
Hark! the death-volley around them is ringing!
Look! with their life-blood the young grass is wet!
Faint is the feeble breath,
Murmuring low in death,
"Tell to our sons how their fathers have died";
Nerveless the iron hand,
Raised for its native land,
Lies by the weapon that gleams at its side.

Over the hillsides the wild knell is tolling,
From their far hamlets the yeomanry come;
As through the storm-clouds the thunder-burst rolling,
Circles the beat of the mustering drum.
Fast on the soldier's path
Darken the waves of wrath,
Long have they gathered and loud shall they fall;
Red glares the musket's flash,
Sharp rings the rifle's crash,
Blazing and clanging from thicket and wall.

Gayly the plume of the horseman was dancing,
Never to shadow his cold brow again;
Proudly at morning the war-steed was prancing,
Reeking and panting he droops on the rein;
Pale is the lip of scorn,
Voiceless the trumpet horn,

Torn is the silken-fringed red cross on high;
Many a belted breast
Low on the turf shall rest,
Ere the dark hunters the herd have passed by.

Snow-girdled crags where the hoarse wind is raving,
Rocks where the weary floods murmur and wail,
Wilds where the fern by the furrow is waving,
Reeled with the echoes that rode on the gale;
Far as the tempest thrills
Over the darkened hills,
Far as the sunshine streams over the plain,
Roused by the tyrant band,
Woke all the mighty land,
Girded for battle, from mountain to main.

Green be the graves where her martyrs are lying!
Shroudless and tombless they sunk to their rest,—
While o'er their ashes the starry folds flying
Wraps the proud eagle they roused from his nest.
Borne on her Northern pine,
Long o'er the foaming brine
Spread her broad banner to storm and to sun;
Heaven keep her ever free,
Wide as o'er land and sea
Floats the fair emblem her heroes have won!

Under what circumstances does the rebel shoulder his gun? What was his fate? What was the effect of his fate? How do these heroes take their rest? For what does the poet ask?

## THE HOT SEASON.

The folks, that on the first of May
Wore winter coats and hose,
Began to say, the first of June,
"Good Lord! how hot it grows!"

At last two Fahrenheits blew up,
And killed two children small,
And one barometer shot dead
A tutor with its ball!

Now all day long the locusts sang
Among the leafless trees;
Three new hotels warped inside out,
The pumps could only wheeze;
And ripe old wine, that twenty years
Had cobwebbed o'er in vain,
Came spouting through the rotten corks
Like Joly's best Champagne!

The Worcester locomotives did
Their trip in half an hour;
The Lowell cars ran forty miles
Before they checked the power;
Roll brimstone soon became a drug,
And loco-focos fell;
All asked for ice, but everywhere
Saltpetre was to sell.

Plump men of mornings ordered tights,
But, ere the scorching noons,
Their candle-moulds had grown as loose
As Cossack pantaloons!
The dogs ran mad, — men could not try
If water they would choose;
A horse fell dead, — he only left
Four red-hot, rusty shoes!

But soon the people could not bear
The slightest hint of fire;
Allusions to caloric drew
A flood of savage ire;

The leaves on heat were all torn out
From every book at school,
And many blackguards kicked and caned
Because they said, "Keep cool!"

The gas-light companies were mobbed,
The bakers all were shot,
The penny press began to talk
Of lynching Doctor Nott;
And all about the warehouse steps
Were angry men in droves,
Crashing and splintering through the doors
To smash the patent stoves!

The abolition men and maids
Were tanned to such a hue,
You scarce could tell them from their friends,
Unless their eyes were blue;
And, when I left, society
Had burst its ancient guards,
And Brattle Street and Temple Place
Were interchanging cards!

Note each point in this lively extravagance and determine the exaggeration.

**General.** — How many of the poems were written for public occasions? What were some of the occasions? What narrative poems do you find? What poems upon patriotic themes? What poem do you consider the most humorous? Analyze its humor. Compare the poems upon slavery with those of Whittier and Lowell upon the same subject. What Yankee traits do you find? What national traits? Do you find metrical variety? Metrical skill?

**James Russell Lowell** (1819–1891). Cambridge was Lowell's birthplace: he graduated from Harvard in the class of '38, and two years afterwards was admitted to the bar. But literature was

his chosen calling. His early poems were published in 1841; a magazine, "The Pioneer," founded by him in 1843, lived through three numbers. He took the anti-slavery side in politics the following year, and during four years thereafter worked in both verse and prose, with results not now important. But in 1848 he published the three poems which gave him his reputation, and which are in some respects not inferior to anything he has done since. They were "The Vision of Sir Launfal," "The Fable for Critics" and "The Biglow Papers," — opening, respectively, the fields of romantic and religious sentiment, of literary criticism and of political satire.

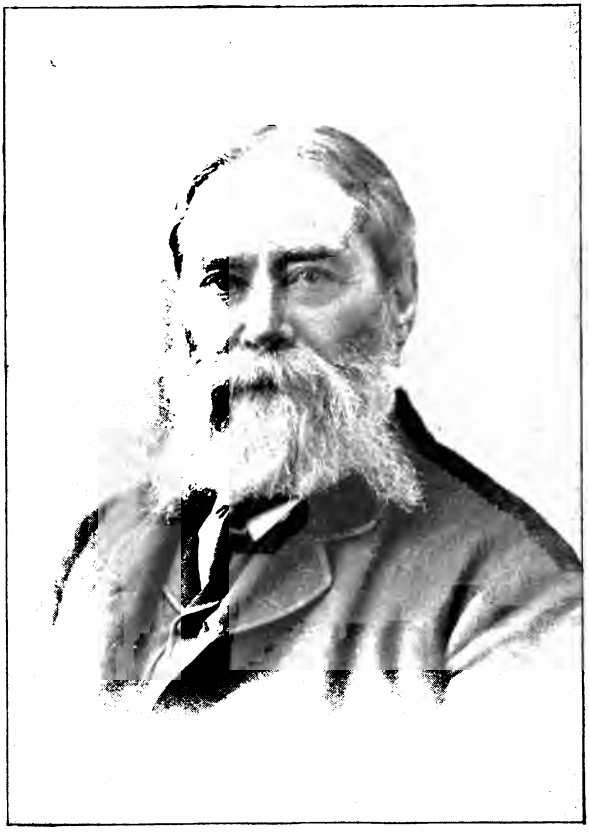
**Three early poems.**

He visited Europe in 1851 and in 1855, returning to fill the chair of Modern Languages at Harvard. He was first editor of "The Atlantic Monthly," in 1857. In 1863, began his connection with "The North American Review," lasting ten years. The essays on literature and life that he contributed to this periodical were published in three volumes — "Fireside Travels," "Among my Books," and "My Study Windows." In 1877, he was appointed minister to Spain, and was transferred, in 1880, to the Court of St. James. "Democracy and Other Essays" comprise addresses delivered during the years of his official duties. During the Civil War he published another series of "Biglow Papers," and at its close, in 1865, recited "The Commemoration Ode," his loftiest and most beautiful poem. "Under the Willows" and "The Cathedral" appeared in 1869, and "Memorial Poems" in 1876.

**Later productions.**

Lowell's mind is of masculine fibre, clear in perception and strong in grasp. His nature has a vein of coarseness, which appears occasionally in his writings, but which, ordinarily, only serves to give character and flavor to his culture. The strong, courageous, explicit temperament of the man shows through all he has written: in its least favorable manifestations it gives an impression of self-consciousness; at its best, it imparts individuality, independence, and life. A certain impatience of disposition sometimes makes him chargeable with haste and carelessness; but it is also connected

**Individuality.**



with the fire and force and sturdy ardor that become contagious in his loftier work.

He is reserved, and often consciously self-restrained; but he has a hearty, humorous sympathy with human nature, and can give vigorous and sagacious interpretations of even its ruder and homelier traits. A measure of intuitive insight, combined with shrewd appreciation, is shown in the careless jingles of his "Fable for Critics." His sense of beauty, in nature and in art, is keen and ingrained, and has been developed by study. It gives grace to both his poetry and his prose; while his graver thoughts about life impart a spirituality of view to his descriptions and interpretations. He is never abstract and metaphysical, like Emerson, but he in a measure accepts Emerson's standpoint. He sees life whole, and with a moderate, judicious optimism. He more enjoys the concrete than the spiritual, if he must choose between the two: and in this he is wise, because his foot and hand are not light enough for the pure spiritual region, and he is never more perfunctory than when he pays a visit to it. The incarnate spirit he welcomes, because he sees that it adds beauty and scope to the subject. But there is a solid basis of human earth in him; and wherever his head may be, his feet are always among the terrestrial roots of things.

**His sense of beauty.**

There is imagination in Lowell: it is not of the sublime order, but it is enough to bestow interest and splendor upon his work. Like his sense of beauty, it has been cultivated, and, like all cultivated things, it occasionally lacks spontaneity. His familiarity with the best literature shows him where the imaginative touch is required; and he will put on that touch, whether it comes from his heart or from his head. Indeed, the threads of Lowell's reading appear in the web of all that he has written; he is only too rich in literary allusions and illustrations: he can see nothing in nature, or in his own mind, that does not remind him of something in a book. Original he is not: but the sum of civilized experience and learning is in his words, and gives them point and impetus. But he has assimilated his studies; they have become organic in his being;

**His imagination.**

they are in the tones of his voice and the look of his eyes. He resists their mastery, and fairly masters them — which he could not have done had his temperament and physical nature been less powerful. His lusty sensuous impulses, healthy and catholic, avail, when he gives them rein, to counterbalance his culture: he can speak in the voice of mankind, as well as of scholars. And in the long run, it will be to the natural and not to the acquired voice that the world will more willingly listen.

His poems, and often his prose, have single lines or passages which are striking and memorable; a fact indicative of talent rather than of inspiration, for the high level is never uniform in anything that he has written. He soars aloft, but drops again, and his average flight is not sublime. His position never has the loneliness or detachment of genius; he is careful not to lose touch with the cultivated human mind: he wishes to appear allied with the results of culture, and not solitary. The awful abyss of unrelated space, in which spirits like Milton, Dante, and Coleridge delighted to lose themselves, has few attractions for him. Wherever he goes, he carries with him the air and diction of a man of the world: we feel that the library and the drawing-room are not far off, even when he is in his most rural or exalted vein. He is strong, but not quite strong enough to abrogate his human strength, and yield himself to the influx of the Divine.

**A man of the world.**

The wide success of his "Biglow Papers" gave him, for many years, the not altogether enviable reputation of an American humorist. No such faithful and humorous presentation of Yankee traits and dialect has elsewhere been made; and the sustained vigor with which Hosea's character is maintained, is enough, even without the pungency of the accompanying satire, to establish a reputation. It was a fortunate conception, because no such thing had been done before, nor is ever likely to be attempted again: it is as unique as Longfellow's "Hiawatha," though so different from it in other respects. But its grotesqueness — its utter lack of beauty — makes one half regret its notoriety: for a great deal of

**The "Biglow Papers" and other poems.**

what is best and most charming in Lowell has no representation in these verses; yet it is with them, more than with any of his loftier poems, that he is likely to be identified. The "Legend of Brittany" and the "Vision of Sir Launfal" are lovely in sentiment, description and workmanship; but they are not so separate in conception as to be called original. The "Harvard Commemoration Ode" is strong, rich and massive, sparkling with gems of thought, and rising high in pinnacles of poetic beauty; but it can hardly be regarded as characteristic of Lowell, in the sense that "Thanatopsis" is characteristic of Bryant, or "The Psalm of Life," of Longfellow; or "The Haunted Palace," of Poe. It is constructed, it is not born. In fact, beautiful and edifying though much of Lowell's poetry is, he is a poet by choice and training rather than inevitably. He can not only find expression in other ways, but it is a question whether, were we obliged to choose between losing his poetry, or his prose, we might not decide to forego the former rather than the latter.

**His critical writings.**

Certainly, his critical writings have a great and enduring value. They are at once subtle and masculine, independent and acute. He writes from a profound knowledge of the best literary product of the world, and from ripe and sane meditation thereupon. His poetical temperament gives vivacity and a creative touch to his conclusions. His literary experience enables him to detect a counterfeit at a glance, and to perceive the emptiness underlying formulas and conventionalities. And so radically an American is he, that all the erudition of Europe, and of antiquity, have not availed to corrupt him one jot: nay, his steadfast native quality gives his judgments of alien things a worth and significance that would otherwise be lacking in them. He has studied the past, but he looks towards the future. He believes that these United States have made successful trial of the most important of national experiments. And so far as love of freedom, catholicity of interests, and sagacious optimism, conveyed in cultivated literary forms, can entitle a writer to renown, that renown belongs to Lowell. During the latter years of his life, in the fullness of his well-earned fame, he was our most distinguished man-of-letters.

## Selections and Exercises.

### ODE.

READ AT THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIGHT AT CONCORD BRIDGE.

19TH APRIL, 1875.

I.

Who cometh over the hills,
Her garments with morning sweet,
The dance of a thousand rills
Making music before her feet?
Her presence freshens the air;
Sunshine steals light from her face;
The leaden footstep of Care
Leaps to the tune of her pace,
Fairness of all that is fair,
Grace at the heart of all grace,
Sweetener of hut and of hall,
Bringer of life out of naught,
Freedom, O, fairest of all
The daughters of Time and Thought!

II.

She cometh, cometh to-day:
Hark! hear ye not her tread,
Sending a thrill through your clay,
Under the sod there, ye dead,
Her nurslings and champions?
Do ye not hear, as she comes,
The bay of the deep-mouthed guns,
The gathering buzz of the drums?
The bells that called ye to prayer,
How wildly they clamor on her,
Crying, "She cometh! prepare

Her to praise and her to honor,
That a hundred years ago
Scattered here in blood and tears
Potent seeds wherefrom should grow
Gladness for a hundred years!"

III.

Tell me, young men, have ye seen,
Creature of diviner mien
For true hearts to long and cry for,
Manly hearts to live and die for?
What hath she that others want?
Brows that all endearments haunt,
Eyes that make it sweet to dare,
Smiles that glad untimely death,
Looks that fortify despair,
Tones more brave than trumpet's breath;
Tell me, maidens, have ye known
Household charm more sweetly rare,
Grace of woman ampler blown,
Modesty more debonair,
Younger heart with wit full grown?
O for an hour of my prime,
The pulse of my hotter years,
That I might praise her in rhyme
Would tingle your eyelids to tears,
Our sweetness, our strength, and our star,
Our hope, our joy, and our trust,
Who lifted us out of the dust,
And made us whatever we are!

IV.

Whiter than moonshine upon snow
Her raiment is, but round the hem
Crimson stained; and, as to and fro
Her sandals flash, we see on them,

And on her instep veined with blue,
Flecks of crimson, on those fair feet,
High-arched, Diana-like, and fleet,
Fit for no grosser stain than dew:
O, call them rather chrisms than stains,
Sacred and from heroic veins!
For, in the glory-guarded pass,
Her haughty and far-shining head
She bowed to shrive Leonidas
With his imperishable dead;
Her, too, Morgarten saw,
Where the Swiss lion fleshed his icy paw;
She followed Cromwell's quenchless star
Where the grim Puritan tread
Shook Marston, Naseby, and Dunbar:
Yea, on her feet are dearer dyes
Yet fresh, nor looked on with untearful eyes.

v.

Our fathers found her in the woods
Where Nature meditates and broods,
The seeds of unexampled things
Which Time to consummation brings
Through life and death and man's unstable moods;
They met her here, not recognized,
A sylvan huntress clothed in furs,
To whose chaste wants her bow sufficed,
Nor dreamed what destinies were hers:
She taught them bee-like to create
Their simpler forms of Church and State;
She taught them to endue
The past with other functions than it knew,
And turn in channels strange the uncertain stream of Fate;
Better than all, she fenced them in their need
With iron-handed Duty's sternest creed,
'Gainst Self's lean wolf that ravens word and deed.

VI.

Why cometh she hither to-day
To this low village of the plain
Far from the Present's loud highway,
From Trade's cool heart and seething brain?
Why cometh she? She was not far away.
Since the soul touched it, not in vain,
With pathos of immortal gain,
'Tis here her fondest memories stay.
She loves yon pine-bemurmured ridge
Where now our broad-browed poet sleeps,
Dear to both Englands; near him he
Who wore the ring of Canace;
But most her heart to rapture leaps
Where stood that era-parting bridge,
O'er which, with footfall still as dew,
The Old Time passed into the New;
Where, as your stealthy river creeps,
He whispers to his listening weeds
Tales of sublimest homespun deeds.
Here English law and English thought
'Gainst the self-will of England fought;
And here were men (coequal with their fate),
Who did great things, unconscious they were great.
They dreamed not what a die was cast
With that first answering shot; what then?
There was their duty; they were men
Schooled the soul's inward gospel to obey,
Though leading to the lion's den.
They felt the habit-hallowed world give way
Beneath their lives, and on went they,
Unhappy who was last.
When Buttrick gave the word,
That awful idol of the unchallenged Past,
Strong in their love, and in their lineage strong,
Fell crashing: if they heard it not,

Yet the earth heard,
Nor ever hath forgot,
As on from startled throne to throne,
Where Superstition sate or conscious Wrong,
A shudder ran of some dread birth unknown.
Thrice venerable spot!
River more fateful than the Rubicon!
O'er those red planks, to snatch her diadem,
Man's Hope, star-girdled, sprang with them,
And over ways untried the feet of Doom strode on.

VII.

Think you these felt no charms
In their gray homesteads and embowered farms?
In household faces waiting at the door
Their evening step should lighten up no more?
In fields their boyish feet had known?
In trees their fathers' hands had set,
And which with them had grown,
Widening each year their leafy coronet?
Felt they no pang of passionate regret
For those unsolid goods that seem so much our own?
These things are dear to every man that lives,
And life prized more for what it lends than gives.
Yea, many a tie, by iteration sweet,
Strove to detain their fatal feet;
And yet the enduring half they chose,
Whose choice decides a man life's slave or king,
The invisible things of God before the seen and known:
Therefore their memory inspiration blows
With echoes gathering on from zone to zone;
For manhood is the one immortal thing
Beneath Time's changeful sky,
And, where it lightened once, from age to age,
Men come to learn, in grateful pilgrimage,
That length of days is knowing when to die.

VIII.

What marvellous change of things and men!
She, a world-wandering orphan then,
So mighty now! Those are her streams
That whirl the myriad, myriad wheels
Of all that does, and all that dreams,
Of all that thinks, and all that feels,
Through spaces stretched from sea to sea;
By idle tongues and busy brains,
By who doth right, and who refrains,
Hers are our losses and our gains;
Our maker and our victim she.

IX.

Maiden half mortal, half divine,
We triumphed in thy coming; to the brinks
Our hearts were filled with pride's tumultuous wine;
Better to-day who rather feels than thinks.
Yet will some graver thoughts intrude,
And cares of sterner mood;
They won thee: who shall keep thee? From the deeps
Where discrowned empires o'er their ruins brood,
And many a thwarted hope wrings its weak hands and weeps,
I hear the voice as of a mighty wind
From all heaven's caverns rushing unconfined,
"I, Freedom, dwell with Knowledge: I abide
With men whom dust of faction cannot blind
To the slow tracings of the Eternal Mind;
With men by culture trained and fortified,
Who bitter duty to sweet lusts prefer,
Fearless to counsel and obey.
Conscience my sceptre is, and law my sword,
Not to be drawn in passion or in play,
But terrible to punish and deter;
Implacable as God's word,
Like it, a shepherd's crook to them that blindly err.

Your firm-pulsed sires, my martyrs and my saints,
Shoots of that only race whose patient sense
Hath known to mingle flux with permanence,
Rated my chaste denials and restraints
Above the moment's dear-paid paradise:
Beware lest, shifting with Time's gradual creep,
The light that guided shine into your eyes.
The envious Powers of ill nor wink nor sleep:
Be therefore timely wise,
Nor laugh when this one steals, and that one lies,
As if your luck could cheat those sleepless spies,
Till the deaf Fury comes your house to sweep!"
I hear the voice, and unaffrighted bow;
Ye shall not be prophetic now,
Heralds of ill, that darkening fly
Between my vision and the rainbowed sky,
Or on the left your hoarse forebodings croak
From many a blasted bough
On Yggdrasil's storm-sinewed oak,
That once was green, Hope of the West, as thou:
Yet pardon if I tremble while I boast;
For I have loved as those who pardon most.

X.

Away, ungrateful doubt, away!
At least she is our own to-day.
Break into rapture, my song,
Verses, leap forth in the sun,
Bearing the joyance along
Like a train of fire as ye run!
Pause not for choosing of words,
Let them but blossom and sing
Blithe as the orchards and birds
With the new coming of spring!
Dance in your jollity, bells;
Shout, cannon; cease not, ye drums;

Answer, ye hillside and dells;
Bow, all ye people! She comes,
Radiant, calm-fronted, as when
She hallowed that April day.
Stay with us! Yes, thou shalt stay,
Softener and strengthener of men,
Freedom, not won by the vain,
Not to be courted in play,
Not to be kept without pain.
Stay with us! Yes, thou wilt stay,
Handmaid and mistress of all,
Kindlier of deed and of thought,
Thou that to hut and to hall
Equal deliverance brought!
Souls of her martyrs, draw near,
Touch our dull lips with your fire,
That we may praise without fear
Her our delight, our desire,
Our faith's inextinguishable star,
Our hope, our remembrance, our trust,
Our present, our past, our to be,
Who will mingle her life with our dust
And make us deserve to be free!

I. What is personified? What is said of her? What is the measure? Is it musical? II. To whom is this part addressed? What was the occasion of a hundred years ago? Is the measure the same as in the first part? As well handled? III. To whom is this part addressed? What equalities of beauty does she possess for each? What does the poet wish himself able to do? Is the measure the same? Is the part as musical as the preceding ones? IV. What is her raiment? What is the significance of the stains? Explain the historical allusions. Is the measure the same? V. Where was she found? Explain the part in your own language. What is the measure? VI. Answer the first question in the part. Explain the history this part celebrates. Who were

the men referred to, and what their service? Study the measure. VII. What held the patriots to earth? Describe the scene he pictures here. Notice the measure. VIII. What is the thought of this short part? What is the measure? Why is the part necessary? IX. With whom does Freedom dwell? What advice does the poet give? Notice the measure. X. What words are to be used in this part? What is his belief in our future? Is the measure of this part the same as that of any other part? Which of the parts do you like best? Why? Recapitulate the main points of the Ode.

## TO H. W. L.,

### ON HIS BIRTHDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 1867.

I need not praise the sweetness of his song,
  Where limpid verse to limpid verse succeeds
Smooth as our Charles, when, fearing lest he wrong
The new moon's mirrored skiff, he slides along,
  Full without noise, and whispers in his reeds.

With loving breath of all the winds his name
  Is blown about the world, but to his friends
A sweeter secret hides behind his fame,
And Love steals shyly through the loud acclaim
  To murmur a *God bless you!* and there ends.

As I muse backward up the checkered years
  Wherein so much was given, so much was lost,
Blessings of both kinds, such as cheapen tears, —
But hush! this is not for profaner ears;
  Let them drink molten pearls nor dream the cost.

Some suck up poison from a sorrow's core,
  As naught but nightshade grew upon earth's ground;
Love turned all his to heart's-ease, and the more
Fate tried his bastions, she but forced a door
  Leading to sweeter manhood and more sound.

Even as a wind-waved fountain's swaying shade
  Seems of mixed race, a gray wraith shot with sun,
So through his trial faith translucent rayed
Till darkness, half disnatured so, betrayed
  A heart of sunshine that would fain o'errun.

Surely if skill in song the shears may stay
  And of its purpose cheat the charmed abyss,
If our poor life be lengthened by a lay,
He shall not go, although his presence may,
  And the next age in praise shall double this.

Long days be his, and each as lusty-sweet
  As gracious natures find his song to be;
May Age steal on with softly-cadenced feet
Falling in music, as for him were meet
  Whose choicest verse is harsher-toned than he!

What are the points mentioned for praise? Is the best of Longfellow in his verse? Do you agree with Lowell as to the good points of Longfellow?

## THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL.

[No. 30 of the "Riverside Literature Series" contains this and other poems.]

Study the different measures. What is the meaning of the first stanza? Of the second? Of the third? What is it we buy? What is given away? Give the description of June in your own language. Find spring poetry in other poets and compare with this. What connection has the lusty June with Sir Launfal? I. How does Sir Launfal prepare for the quest? What is his quest? Under what conditions will he pursue his quest? What is the Holy Grail? What is mail? What is the simile in which the castle is used? Describe the castle. What is a drawbridge? How did Sir Launfal appear as he rode away? Where was there mourning? What was Sir Launfal's treatment of the

leper? What did the leper say? *Prelude* to part second. Study this description of winter. In what condition was Sir Launfal now? What is a yule-log? What is a seneschal? II. What is the kind of mourning now? What badge did he wear? What is described in the third stanza? How did Sir Launfal grow familiar with such scenes? What appeared to him as he mused? Had he seen it before? How had he treated it? How did he treat it now? Who was the leper? What does he say to Sir Launfal? Had Sir Launfal really gone through these experiences? What effect did the vision have on him?

**General.** — What do you say of Lowell as an artist? Of the criticism in "A Fable for Critics"? Has he narrative poems? What are his odes? Has he lyrics of love? War? Patriotism? Does Lowell's love of nature seem genuine? Is he strong in description? In metaphysics? Is he eloquent? Impassioned? Optimistic? Masculine? Conventional? Original? Imaginative? Patriotic? Does his poetry spring from the head? The heart? Which in greater degree? Is he the most skilled of our artists? The most musical? In what qualities is he superlative?

**John Greenleaf Whittier** (1807–1892), the son of a Quaker farmer, was born near Haverhill, Massachusetts, on the 17th of December. He loved books, but his schooling was very limited. Poetic genius, however, Whittier had, and poetic genius can flourish, at need, even on the bare rocks of New England. Pure, simple and peaceful was the social atmosphere in which he grew up; and a copy of Burns's poems, which early fell into his possession, revealed to him his own latent powers, and served, in a measure, as his poetic model.

**Early influences.**

Some of his first verses were published by William Lloyd Garrison in the Newburyport "Free Press," and were the cause of Garrison's visiting the Whittier homestead, where he found the young author, a barefooted boy, with his hand on the plough-tail. The boy and the man discovered bonds of mutual sympathy: more poems were the result, and, for a few months, Whittier was

employed in Boston to write for the "American Manufacturer." A year or two later, in 1830, he edited the "Haverhill Gazette," and contributed both prose and poetry to contemporary periodicals; and in 1831, he assumed control of the "New England Weekly Review," to which, in the course of eighteen months, he contributed many poems and sketches. At the close of this year his pieces were published in a volume, called "New England Legends in Prose and Verse." He now gave up editing for the nonce, and went home, where he continued his poetical activity, and gave much attention, under Garrison's influence, to the question of negro slavery. Pamphlets and letters upon this subject appeared over his signature during several years thereafter, and he attended meetings, mingled with agitators, and signed declarations. The effect of all this upon his poetry was visible enough; he gained the title of Laureate of the Abolition Party; but it must be admitted that he often sacrificed art to opinion. His anti-slavery verses were finally collected in a volume under the title of "Voices of Freedom, from 1833 to 1848."

**Connection with Abolition.**

From this period to the outbreak of the war his literary and political labor was continuous. Besides his Abolitionist productions, he wrote such poems as "Mogg Megone," "The Bridal of Pennacook" and "Flud Ireson"; he edited for twelve years the "National Era," and took a hand in the building of the "Atlantic Monthly." His poems written during the war appeared afterwards in a volume called "In War Time." When the great conflict was over, he turned with relief from the passions and struggles of the past, and devoted himself to the peaceful rural life which was really congenial to him. "Snow-Bound" (1866), "The Tent on the Beach" (1867), "Among the Hills" (1868) and "Hazel Blossoms" (1875) indicate the current of his poetic thought.

**Later works.**

The bitter sectional feelings which prompted a part of Whittier's verse, and the passionate conviction which guided his pen, though they may have helped the cause, injured the artist, and hindered his artistic development. Uneducated, narrow and

prejudiced, his headlong zeal was in harmony with those fiery times, when men wished to act rather than to reflect. To Whittier, the Southern slaveholders were opponents of civilization, and every slave was the embodiment of an outrage done to human nature. His epithets were severe, and his denunciations stern. The epoch having passed, the verse of which it was the occasion must cease to be judged by other than literary standards; and according to these standards, its value is, for the most part, comparatively small.

**The Abolition Poetry.**

But when his true genius is in the ascendant, Whittier is a simple, charming, original poet. There is nothing studied or labored in his productions: he seems to write without effort, from the depths of a tranquil, reverent, beauty-loving spirit. His verse reflects the thoughts, habits, and aspirations of a plain, strong, wholesome race, a race capable of heroism and of moral grandeur. He loved the hills, valleys, and coast of New England; he loved its legends and its history, and he has a happy power of graphically picturing the essence of their charm. In a singular manner he touched realism with imagination, and made it art; with intuitive insight he selected his materials, and combined them in forms of seemingly spontaneous harmony. His touch, uniformly light and graceful, is sometimes too careless: but his deficient education, though it limits his subjects, and deprives him of Lowell's power of broad allusion, adds a distinct loveliness to his work. He is characteristically and almost exclusively American in his theme: and he reaches the heart of the people as a poet of higher culture might fail to do. Sincerity, charity, heroism, and the spirit of human brotherhood breathe through his best verse: he strengthens us for our daily trials, and defines and elevates our pleasures.

**His true genius.**

## Selections and Exercises.

### SKIPPER IRESON'S RIDE.

Of all the rides since the birth of time,
Told in story or sung in rhyme, —
On Apuleius's Golden Ass,
Or one-eyed Calendar's horse of brass,
Witch astride of a human back,
Islam's prophet on Al-Borák, —
The strangest ride that ever was sped
Was Ireson's, out from Marblehead!
  Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
  Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
  By the women of Marblehead!

Body of turkey, head of owl,
Wings a-droop like a rained-on fowl,
Feathered and ruffled in every part,
Skipper Ireson stood in the cart.
Scores of women, old and young,
Strong of muscle, and glib of tongue,
Pushed and pulled up the rocky lane,
Shouting and singing the shrill refrain:
  "Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,
  Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt
  By the women o' Morble'ead!"

Wrinkled scolds with hands on hips,
Girls in bloom of cheek and lips,
Wild-eyed, free-limbed, such as chase
Bacchus round some antique vase,
Brief of skirt, with ankles bare,
Loose of kerchief and loose of hair,
With conch-shells blowing and fish-horns' twang,
Over and over the Mænads sang:

"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,
Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt
By the women o' Morble'ead!"

Small pity for him: — He sailed away
From a leaking ship, in Chaleur Bay, —
Sailed away from a sinking wreck,
With his own town's-people on her deck!
"Lay by! lay by!" they called to him.
Back he answered, "Sink or swim!
Brag of your catch of fish again!"
And off he sailed through the fog and rain!
Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!

Fathoms deep in dark Chaleur
That wreck shall lie forevermore.
Mother and sister, wife and maid,
Looked from the rocks of Marblehead
Over the moaning and rainy sea, —
Looked for the coming that might not be!
What did the winds and the sea-birds say
Of the cruel captain who sailed away? —
Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!

Through the street, on either side,
Up flew windows, doors swung wide;
Sharp-tongued spinsters, old wives gray,
Treble lent the fish-horns' bray.
Sea-worn grandsires, cripple-bound,
Hulks of old sailors run aground,
Shook head, and fist, and hat, and cane,
And cracked with curses the hoarse refrain;

"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,
Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt
By the women of Morble'ead!"

Sweetly along the Salem road
Bloom of orchard and lilac showed.
Little the wicked skipper knew
Of the fields so green and the sky so blue.
Riding there in his sorry trim,
Like an Indian idol glum and grim,
Scarcely he seemed the sound to hear
Of voices shouting, far and near:
"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,
Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt
By the women o' Morble'ead!"

"Hear me, neighbors!" at last he cried,—
"What to me is this noisy ride?
What is the shame that clothes the skin
To the nameless horror that lives within?
Waking or sleeping, I see a wreck,
And hear a cry from a reeling deck!
Hate me and curse me,—I only dread
The hand of God and the face of the dead!"
Said old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!

Then the wife of the skipper lost at sea
Said, "God has touched him!—why should we?"
Said an old wife mourning her only son,
"Cut the rogue's tether and let him run!"
So with soft relentings and rude excuse,
Half scorn, half pity, they cut him loose,
And gave him a cloak to hide him in,
And left him alone with his shame and sin.

Poor Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!

Look up the references to historic or traditional rides and describe them. What kind of a figure had been made of the skipper? Who were his judges? From the poet's description of them would you think the culprit likely to receive impartial judgment? For what deed was the skipper punished? Was the skipper mortified at his situation? What emotion really controlled him at the time? Was he deeper or shallower, spiritually, than his judges? Can you give a quotation from the Bible corresponding to the final reflection of these judges?

## SNOW-BOUND.

[This poem can be had for 15 cents in No. 4 of the "Riverside Literature Series."]

How is the snow-storm foretold? What was the appearance of the sun? Does "a hard, dull bitterness of cold" usually foretell an immediate snow-storm in your latitude? What preparations were made for the night? What resemblances do you find between the concluding lines of the second stanza descriptive of the fall of the snow and the lines quoted from Emerson at the beginning of the poem? What differences? Which is more accurate? Which is more vigorous? Which is more detailed? Find other descriptions of snow-storms and compare them. Compare all of them with the real thing the first opportunity. How long did the snow fall? Have you ever known it to fall so long and heavily? Do you recognize the description of the appearance of the world when it ceased, as accurate? How did the day pass? Describe the preparations for the night. The scene when the members of the family gathered around the fire. Who were the members? Of what did each one talk? Most of the talkers recounted reminiscences; which one did not? How does he represent a bright hope for the future? With what reading matter was the household supplied? What did the country newspaper contain? Have

you ever been snow-bound in a country home? Did you enjoy it? Would you enjoy it? Why? Would you enjoy it more now since reading this poem? Do you think the poet enjoyed the experience or the retrospect more? Why? Do you know of an account of a snow-storm as complete as this? Are idyls commonly snow-scenes?

Characterize fully the kind of life represented here. Take paper and pencil; begin with the most salient characteristics; amplify and elaborate. Do this work thoroughly and take to-morrow's recitation hour for comparing your papers if your teacher can allow you the time.

**General.** — Had Whittier a liberal education? Was his experience a broad one? Was he broad and liberal in his views? What grounds do you have for the opinion you have expressed? What other American poets have used Indian legends? Can you name an American poet who has dealt with them more elaborately and successfully? How does he excel Whittier? Read "Voices of Freedom," "In War Time" and "National Lyrics." In what other poets do you find poems upon slavery? Do any of them show an equal volume on this subject? Do any of them show so much zeal? Passion? Skill? Extravagance? Does he warn or condemn? Argue or denounce? Was he a poet or a seer? The poet often sacrificed artistic finish to the passion and urgency of the occasion; do you think it better or worse for him to have done so? Why?

Do you find an affection for New England scenery and life in his poetry? What poems? Do you think him to be a pious man? Why? Read "My Psalm." Put in your own words the ideas it expresses. Do his Quaker sympathies show? From what region does he derive the materials for his ballads?

Do you find any lyrics of love? Of patriotism? Classify his lyrics by the subjects that inspire them.

Is his poetry profound? Metaphysical? Reflective? Argumentative? Serene? Turbulent? Indifferent? Impassioned? Eloquent? Touching? Impulsive? Musical? Graceful? Earn-

est? Varied? Impressive? Soothing? Provincial? Joyous? Depressing? Hopeful? In each case give the grounds of your decision.

**Edwin Percy Whipple** (1819–1886) was born in Boston, and was the first American writer to devote himself exclusively to criticism. For this, if for no other reason, he would deserve honorable mention, since his work proved that this country had already advanced far enough in culture and character to admit of searching and sympathetic native study. But Whipple was not only a critic; he was also a critic of first-rate ability. His literary judgments were as just as they were acute, and have been confirmed by the verdict of later years. His mind was both penetrating and comprehensive; he took the philosophical view, and showed the sources and relations of existing conditions. The range of his reading was extensive and its subjects well-chosen; he was familiar with the field of European literature, as well as with American: only Lowell rivalled him in this respect, and he gave himself, as Lowell did not, wholly to the critical function. He may fairly be classed with such men as Matthew Arnold in England, and Taine in France; for though his scope was less pretentious than theirs, the actual value of his achievements will probably not be found inferior. His gift of interpretation and expression was commensurate with his insight; so that his essays are not merely instructive to students, but delightful to the general reader. Humor he possesses in abundance; eloquence; and the faculty of giving charm and lucidity to subjects apparently dry and intricate. His merits have been acknowledged by competent foreign judges, and many an English scholar's library contains his books. No one who wishes to acquire a vivid and trustworthy conception of eminent American books and men, and of the conditions of recent American existence, can do better than to consult the writings of Whipple.

**Our first professional critic.**

He was a lecturer as well as a writer, though his topics on the platform were of the same class as his themes in the study. But

the humor, vivacity and emphasis of his oral delivery made him a favorite with audiences. Nor was he less popular in society, where his genial qualities and brilliant talk made him more than welcome. He was the personal friend of the chief American writers of his day, a fact creditable to both him and them, since he never permitted personal predilections to color his literary opinions.

**Social relations.**

He studied and interpreted men as well as books, and had not a little to say on such topics as the laws of government, the principles of civilization, and the political questions of the day. One of his volumes, "The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth," treats of those great writers of the sixteenth century whose productions belong as much to America as to England. "Washington and the Principles of the Revolution" is a criticism of the first crucial epoch of our history; "Daniel Webster and Rufus Choate" covers an interesting region of our Constitutional period; and such books as "Success and its Conditions," "Character and Characteristic Men," and "Literature and Life," discuss more general aspects of existence. After his death a volume of posthumous sketches, largely political, was published; but his fame is based upon and secured by what his own judgment had previously prompted him to put forth.

**R. H. Dana, Jr.** (1815–1882), is known to literature chiefly by his "Two Years before the Mast," a record of a voyage made in 1833, or thereabouts, from New England to California, by way of Cape Horn. This was fifteen years before the discovery of gold on the Western coast, and the country was practically uninhabited. The only trade was in hides, and it was to barter for these that the voyage was undertaken. Dana, by way of restoring his infirm health, shipped as a common seaman, and wrote this story of his experiences several years after his return to Boston. It is one of the best, if not the best, true narrative of a sea-life ever published: the style is quiet and simple, the descriptions vivid and stirring, and the record of facts so manifestly accurate and impartial, and, at the same time, so

**A famous narrative of sea-life.**

thoughtful and intelligent, that the reader feels as if he himself were a participant in the author's adventures. A hitherto unknown side of life is revealed in all its details: and its veracity and importance are evidenced by the fact that the book is still in print, and is probably read by as many persons to-day as at the time of its first appearance. Mr. Dana, after his return, applied himself to the study and practice of maritime law, and never seriously attempted to repeat his first literary success. It is seldom that a writer has achieved a fame so enduring on the basis of a single volume.

**Herman Melville** (1819–1891). Forty years ago, few American authors had so wide a reputation as Melville, whose books of sea-adventure, part fact and part fancy, were read and praised in England quite as much and as warmly as in this country. Not to have read "Typee" and "Omoo" was not to have made the acquaintance of the most entertaining and novel current literature: and those who take them up to-day find their charm and interest almost unimpaired. The leading sea-novelist of the present day has acknowledged Melville as his master; and there is no doubt that he possessed not only exhaustive technical knowledge of his chosen field, but that his talent for exploiting it amounted to genius. The main substance of his books is plainly founded on fact: but the facts are so judiciously selected as to produce the effect of art, while the flavoring of fiction is so artfully introduced as to seem like fact. All the stories are told in the first person, and there is a fascination and mystery in the narrator's personality that much enhances the interest of the tale. But Melville's imagination has a tendency to wildness and metaphysical extravagance; and when he trusted to it alone, he becomes difficult and sometimes repulsive. There seems, also, to be a background of gloom in his nature, making itself felt even in the midst of his sunshine: and now and then his speculations and rhapsodies have a tinge almost of insanity. "Typee" and "Omoo" are stories of adventure in the Pacific archipelago, as is also "Mardi," but the latter

**An early sea-novelist.**

merges into a quasi-symbolic analysis of human life, perplexing to the general reader, though the splendor and poetic beauty of the descriptions win his admiration. "Redburn" is the narrative of a voyage to Liverpool before the mast, in an American clipper, and is a model of simplicity and impressiveness: "White Jacket" describes life on an American man-of-war, and overflows with humor, character, adventure and absorbing pictures of a kind of existence which has now ceased forever to exist. "Moby Dick, or The Whale" takes up the whole subject of whaling, as practised in the '30's and '40's, and is, if anything, more interesting and valuable than "White Jacket"; the scenes are grouped about a wildly romantic and original plot, concerned with the chase round the world of an enormous white whale — Moby Dick — by a sea-captain who has previously lost a limb in a conflict with the monster, and has sworn revenge. This is the most powerful of Melville's books; it was also the last of any literary importance. "Pierre, or The Ambiguities" is a repulsive, insane and impossible romance, in which the sea has no part, and one or two later books need not be mentioned. But Melville's position in literature is secure and solitary: he surpasses Cooper, when Cooper writes of the sea; and no subsequent writer has even challenged a comparison with him on that element.

**Mrs. Elizabeth (Barstow) Stoddard** (1823– ) was born in a seaport of Massachusetts, and was married at the age of thirty to Richard Henry Stoddard, the poet and literary critic. She is known as the author of three novels of New England life as it was forty or fifty years ago. These books were first published at about the time of the outbreak of the Civil War, and have lately been republished in a uniform edition. Few men have written stories more original and powerful than these. They are short, concentrated and austere; they are pictures, not of events, but of being and growth. The dialogues are brief and pregnant, and serve not to advance the plot, but to reveal character. They evince deep and unflinching insight into the spiritual realities of life;

**An uncompromising Realist of the soul.**

the seemingly idle and purposeless utterances of the persons of the drama admit us into a strange and profound intimacy with their natures. The outward appearance of these persons is ordinary and, as a rule, unattractive: they live in commonplace surroundings: no singular experience or exceptional occurrence is employed to excite our attention. But the springs of thought and emotion are laid bare, and we see, beneath the familiar exterior, a novel and impressive interior region. There is no trace of the romantic or of the ideal in the narrative; the realism is uncompromising, but it is realism of the soul rather than of the body. The material conditions are touched truthfully, but not insistently; the soul is shown as it is, unsoftened, unmitigated, selfish, cruel, passionate, secret, audacious. The drama is rendered more powerful by the local setting: the gloomy and rigid Puritan rule and habit of life, in deadly but silent grapple with the instincts and intuitions of the human spirit. Mrs. Stoddard has no passages of explanation or analysis: she aims to make her characters live before you, and you must learn to know them as you would learn to know people in the real world. Nothing is more original — more opposed to the conventionalities of fiction — than her treatment of the passion of love and hate. The stronger the emotion, the more rigorously it strives to conceal itself. To say that there is no "gush" in these stories would be the extreme of understatement. They are as severe as the old Greek dramas; yet there is a personal human quality in them which the Greek has not. To read — or, rather, to study — this remarkable trilogy of novels is to undergo a fresh experience, not only of fiction but of life. Their quality is too intense and stern, and the narrow, unlovely New England setting is too unfamiliar, to admit of their ever becoming popular: but they are strong and vital enough to modify, and for the better, the tendencies of modern fiction. Beauty enters into them but rarely; but when it does come, it is like a violet in the desert, the sweeter for its dreary and unsympathetic environment. The humor is virile and spontaneous, widely different from the studied and giggling humor of the contemporary fashion. The titles of Mrs.

Stoddard's books are "Two Men," "Temple House," and "The Morgesons."

**William Starbuck Mayo** (1812– ) is the author of a couple of books for boys — "Kaloolah" and "The Berber," which still survive, after the vicissitudes of thirty or forty years; and of a novel of modern New York life — "Never Again," which, though published little more than twelve years ago, is forgotten. The two first books are stories of adventure in Africa and other remote places, in which physical strength and daring, romantic love, and perilous adventure, form the substance of the narrative. They are written with vigor and effect, and with a certain evident pleasure and interest on the author's part which are contagious. There is incident on every page, and the hero and the heroine are delectable and satisfactory in every necessary respect. A vein of humorous satire is also perceptible in "Kaloolah," which shows a comprehensive grasp of life by the writer. As for "Never Again," it possesses a labyrinthine plot, and a numerous array of characters, but the author's aim is inscrutable, and his romance is put in in the wrong place. It produces no definite effect on the mind, and its improbabilities are grotesque. It had, however, a measure of success in London, where it was accepted as a veracious picture of contemporary life in Northeastern America.

**Josiah Gilbert Holland** (1819–1881) was born in Belchertown, Massachusetts, the son of a poor mechanic and inventor. He was nearly forty years old before, under the pseudonym of "Timothy Titcomb," he made his first success in literature, in a series of papers addressed to young men, and published in the "Springfield Republican." The interval had been spent in hard and distasteful work — first in trying to get an education, then in trying to teach others; he took a diploma at a medical school, waited for practice that never came, went to Virginia, and returned; married; and finally settled down with Samuel Bowles to work on the "Springfield Republican." It was at Bowles's suggestion that the "Timothy Titcomb" papers were begun;

and when they were collected in a volume, it was the firm of Charles Scribner & Co. that undertook their publication. The association of author and publisher, thus begun, resulted, years after, in the founding of "Scribner's Monthly," now "The Century," one of the most successful magazines in the world.

**The founder of "Scribner's Magazine."**

Meanwhile, Holland wrote numerous novels and poems and papers, all of which were successful, and some of them conspicuously so. Among them may be mentioned "Miss Gilbert's Career," published in 1860, "Plain Talk on Familiar Subjects" (1865), "Kathrina," a poem (1867), "Arthur Bonnicastle" (1871), first published serially in "Scribner's Monthly," "The Mistress of the Manse" (1875).

Josiah Gilbert Holland.

Holland's writings fall into three groups: the poems, the novels, and the papers on every-day morals and duties. The latter discuss a wide range of familiar topics, and the style is homely and commonplace. They place the average reader's own best thoughts before him, and it is to this catholic and unpretentious quality that they owe their success. The novels portray the conflict between honest unselfishness and self-seeking greed: the poems combine popular sentiment and morality. All are more or less didactic — they are meant to convey a lesson. None of Holland's writings have literary value: but their wide success shows that literary value is by no means essential to the attainment of popularity: and their freedom from sensationalism and all vicious features is to be commended.

**Edward Everett Hale** (1822– ) is a scholar of fair attainments, and is beloved and influential as a clergyman in Boston. But he has written enough to show that, had he devoted himself to

literature, he might have reached a high place among our men of the pen. He has the literary touch and instinct, a vigorous, enjoyable temperament, and a sane, thoughtful, humorous mind. In some respects he may be regarded as the forerunner of Frank Stockton. He delights to treat impossible subjects in a realistic manner. But, beneath the fanciful humor of his conceptions, there is generally a deeper quality, which those who care for more than the outside may profit by. There is a grave moral in "The Man without a Country," a tale first published in the "Atlantic Monthly," and so artfully constructed as to appear like a true narrative. "My Double, and how he undid me," is purely comical, though the comedy is admirably managed: while "The Brick Moon" unites the fancy of Jules Verne with the solid literary workmanship of Poe's "Hans Pfaal." These stories can be read again and again; they are charming, not only as stories, but also for their literary texture and human quality. Their originality is not in the structure of the plot merely; it is ingrain: its source is in the make of the author's mind. He is a master of the material he works in; and his productions, comparatively few in number, are likely to last. In addition to the series above mentioned, he has written such short novels as "Ten Times One is Ten" and "In His Name," — books which combine wholesome and hearty feeling with sound good sense and broad morality.

**A Boston scholar.**

Edward Everett Hale.

**Theodore Winthrop** (1828–1861), a descendant of Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts, received a fine education, and was expected by his friends to do something worthy of his ancestry, and of his own marked abilities. But, until the breaking out of

the Civil War, he seemed unable to find anything to do. He travelled in Europe, and in the West, and kept a journal of his experiences; he was a charming companion, and was on intimate terms with some of the best men of his time; but year after year he remained idle. When war was declared, however, he joined a regiment, and a few months later was shot at Great Bethel, in an otherwise unimportant skirmish. Meanwhile he had contributed to the "Atlantic Monthly" several papers descriptive of his camp experiences, and a short story called "Love on Skates." After his death, several complete novels in manuscript were found among his effects, and these were published by Ticknor & Fields. They were received with great favor, partly due, no doubt, to the tragic end of their young author. They are strong stories, full of action and passion, but are written in a self-conscious, abrupt style; the sentiment is forced and the characterization unnatural. In "Cecil Dreeme," the first to be published, the scene is laid in New York, "Chrysalis College" being the old University Building on Washington Square. It is a morbid and gloomy tale. The next volume to appear was "John Brent," a story of life on the Western plains. It is a healthier story than the other, and the chapter called "The Gallop of Three" is a stirring piece of writing. A black horse, Don Fulano, plays a leading part in the narrative. "Edwin Brothertoft" is the name of the third novel, which goes back to Revolutionary times. "The Canoe and the Saddle," compiled from the author's journals, followed the novels. Winthrop lacked experience, and in aiming to be original, became cramped and artificial: but he aimed high, and there are the germs of good possibilities in his pages.

**Some stirring stories.**

**Bayard Taylor** (1825–1878). Beginning the world in an obscure Pennsylvania village, without money, without friends, and with little or no education, Taylor died at fifty-three, one of the best-known and best-loved men of letters in America. He was renowned as a traveller, popular as a journalist, praised as a novelist, in demand as a lecturer and

**A worker in many fields.**

admired as a poet. He lived to fill the post of Minister to Germany, and he was the friend and favorite of the foremost American literary men of his time.

It was a brilliant and energetic career, and to outsiders it seemed a successful one; but Taylor had a high and abstracted ambition, and he felt that, in what he most cared for, his success had been but partial. He desired to be a great poet: poetry was the end and aim of his life: all else was but conducive or preparatory to that. In order to write poetry, it was necessary to see and to know; and, meanwhile, to provide himself with the means of livelihood. He saw Europe at twenty years of age, travelling from place to place on foot, and supporting himself by letters written to the New York "Tribune." He repeated and extended his journeyings, visited the far East, and rejoiced in the ardor of tropic suns, penetrated northward to where the sun rolls along the horizon, instead of sinking beneath it, climbed glaciers and traversed deserts, and filled his memory with the history and the relics of antiquity. By constant application to all manner of literary work, he acquired at last a tolerable competence; but although, by that time, he had produced a fair amount of verse, he felt that opportunity and leisure had as yet been wanting to realize the high excellence that he coveted. But the opportunity had only been postponed: it had not been lost. Now it had come: and he bent himself to his lofty task with hopeful ardor. He wrote better than he had ever before written; he produced poems which were good, admirable — all but great. But they were not quite great: and no one recognized this truth so quickly and clearly as he. He had miscalculated his powers; they had sufficed to bring him

Bayard Taylor.

**His high ambition.**

almost within reach of his goal, and there they failed him. It was a tragedy of the soul, to be appreciated by those only who were as finely organized as he. He had dreamed of being first; and to find himself, at the end of his career, anywhere else than first was to him no better than to have fallen at the outset. He died, while yet comparatively young, a disappointed man, though only those who knew him most intimately suspected it.

His books were many. Besides his prose descriptions of his various journeys, from the "Views Afoot" to the "Visit to India," he wrote four novels, of which the first, "Hannah Thurston," is the best; and published "Rhymes of Travel," "California Ballads," "Poems of the Orient," and "Lars." He was at his best in his lyrics: and such poems as "The Bedouin Song," and "Amram's Wooing" are nearly perfect. His narrative poems have many fine passages, but are, as a rule, better in conception than in execution. "The Prophet" attempts to render poetical a suggestion derived from the Mormon episode; "Prince Deukalion" traces, in dramatic form, the course of civilization, past and to come. His best poem is "The Masque of the Gods," written late in life, and with extraordinary rapidity. It was in his last years, too, that he made a translation of Goethe's "Faust," which is regarded as the best in existence. His acquaintance with German literature was profound, and his wife was a German woman.

**Literary history.**

His genius showed strongest in emotional and erotic poetry. But he sometimes soared so high that one feels as if a few strokes more of his wings would have made his immortality secure.

**A lyric poet of high order.**

## Selections and Exercises.

### A SYMBOL.

I.

Heavy, and hot, and gray,
Day following unto day,
A felon gang, their blind life drag away, —

Blind, vacant, dumb, as Time,
Lapsed from his wonted prime,
Begot them basely in incestuous crime;

So little life there seems
About the woods and streams, —
Only a sleep, perplexed with nightmare dreams.

The burden of a sigh
Stifles the weary sky,
Where smouldering clouds in ashen masses lie:

The forests fain would groan,
But, silenced into stone,
Crouch, in the dull blue vapors round them thrown.

O light, more drear than gloom!
Than death more dead such bloom.
Yet life — yet life — shall burst this gathering doom!

II.

Behold! a swift and silent fire
Yon dull cloud pierces, in the west,
And blackening, as with growing ire,
He lifts his forehead from his breast.

He mutters to the ashy host
That all around him sleeping lie —
Sole chieftain on the airy coast,
To fight the battles of the sky.

He slowly lifts his weary strength,
His shadow rises on the day,
And distant forests feel at length
A wind from landscapes far away.

III.

How shall the cloud unload its thunder?
How shall its flashes fire the air?
Hills and valleys are dumb with wonder:
Lakes look up with a leaden stare.

Hark! the lungs of the striding giant
Bellow an angry answer back!
Hurling the hair from his brows defiant,
Crushing the laggards along his track.

Now his step, like a battling Titan's,
Scales in flame the hills of the sky;
Struck by his breath, the forest whitens;
Fluttering waters feel him nigh!

Stroke on stroke of his thunder-hammer —
Sheets of flame from his anvil hurled —
Heaven's doors are burst in the clamor.
He alone possesses the world!

IV.

Drowned woods, shudder no more:
Vexed lakes, smile as before:
Hills that vanished, appear again:
Rise for harvest, prostrate grain!

Shake thy jewels, twinkling grass:
Blossoms, tint the winds that pass:
Sun, behold a world restored!
World, again thy son is lord!

Thunder-spasms the waking be
Into Life from Apathy:
Life, not Death, is in the gale, —
Let the coming Doom prevail!

I. This part describes the hot, sultry days preceding a storm. Take it stanza by stanza and study the imagery and the tense expression. II. The gathering of the storm. Does it increase the effect of the description to personify the cloud and make it a leader? What is the "ashy host"? III. The storm in its fury. Note the gradual growth in violence and power till the final line, "He alone possesses the world." IV. What is the appearance of the landscape after the storm has passed away? What does it signify to life?

Do you know of a more vivid description of a storm? Compare it with any other description you can find.

BEDOUIN SONG.

From the Desert I come to thee
On a stallion shod with fire;
And the winds are left behind
In the speed of my desire.
Under thy window I stand,
And the midnight hears my cry:
I love thee, I love but thee,
With a love that shall not die
*Till the sun grows cold,*
*And the stars are old,*
*And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold!*

Look from thy window and see
My passion and my pain;
I lie on the sands below,
And I faint in thy disdain.
Let the night-winds touch thy brow
With the heat of my burning sigh,
And melt thee to hear the vow
Of a love that shall not die
*Till the sun grows cold,*
*And the stars are old,*
*And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold!*

My steps are nightly driven,
  By the fever in my breast,
To hear from thy lattice breathed
  The word that shall give me rest.
Open the door of thy heart,
  And open thy chamber door,
And my kisses shall teach thy lips
  The love that shall fade no more
    *Till the sun grows cold,*
    *And the stars are old,*
    *And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold!*

What are the most conspicuous qualities of this poem? Meaning of "Bedouin"? Has the poem the "Bedouin" atmosphere? How is the atmosphere secured? Compare this poem to Shelley's "Lines to an Indian Air." Which do you prefer? Why?

## AMRAM'S WOOING.

I.

You ask, O Frank! how Love is born
Within these glowing climes of Morn,
Where envious veils conceal the charms
That tempt a Western lover's arms,
And how, without a voice or sound,
From heart to heart the path is found,
Since on the eye alone is flung
The burden of the silent tongue.
You hearken with a doubtful smile
Whene'er the wandering bards beguile
Our evening indolence with strains
Whose words gush molten through our veins,—
The songs of Love, but half confessed,
Where Passion sobs on Sorrow's breast,
And mighty longings, tender fears,
Steep the strong heart in fire and tears.

The source of each accordant strain
Lies deeper than the Poet's brain.
First from the people's heart must spring
The passions which he learns to sing;
They are the wind, the harp is he,
To voice their fitful melody, —
The language of their varying fate,
Their pride, grief, love, ambition, hate, —
The talisman which holds inwrought
The touchstone of the listener's thought;
That penetrates each vain disguise,
And brings his secret to his eyes.
For, like a solitary bird
That hides among the boughs unheard
Until some mate, whose carol breaks,
Its own betraying song awakes,
So, to its echo in those lays,
The ardent heart itself betrays.
Crowned with a prophet's honor, stands
The Poet, on Arabian sands;
A chief, whose subjects love his thrall, —
The sympathizing heart of all.

II.

Vaunt not your Western maids to me,
Whose charms to every gaze are free:
My love is selfish, and would share
Scarce with the sun, or general air,
The sight of beauty which has shone
Once for mine eyes, and mine alone.
Love likes concealment; he can dress
With fancied grace the loveliness
That shrinks behind its virgin veil,
As hides the moon her forehead pale
Behind a cloud, yet leaves the air

Softer than if her orb were there.
And as the splendor of a star,
When sole in heaven, seems brighter far,
So shines the eye, Love's star and sun,
The brighter, that it shines alone.
The light from out its darkness sent
Is Passion's life and element;
And when the heart is warm and young,
Let but that single ray be flung
Upon its surface, and the deep
Heaves from its unsuspecting sleep,
As heaves the ocean when its floor
Breaks over the volcano's core.
Who thinks if cheek or lip be fair?
Is not all beauty centered where
The soul looks out, the feelings move,
And Love his answer gives to love?
Look on the sun, and you will find
For other sights your eyes are blind.
Look — if the colder blood you share
Can give your heart the strength to dare —
In eyes of dark and tender fire:
What more can blinded love desire?

III.

I was a stripling, quick and bold,
And rich in pride as poor in gold,
When God's good will my journey bent
One day to Shekh Abdallah's tent.
My only treasure was a steed
Of Araby's most precious breed;
And whether 'twas in boastful whim
To show his mettled speed of limb,
Or that presumption, which, in sooth,
Becomes the careless brow of youth, —

Which takes the world as birds the air,
And moves in freedom everywhere, —
It matters not. But 'midst the tents
I rode in easy confidence,
Till to Abdallah's door I pressed
And made myself the old man's guest.
My "Peace be with you!" was returned
With the grave courtesy he learned
From age and long authority,
And in God's name he welcomed me.
The pipe replenished, with its stem
Of jasmine wood and amber gem,
Was at my lips, and while I drew
The rosy-sweet, soft vapor through
In ringlets of dissolving blue,
Waiting his speech with reverence meet,
A woman's garments brushed my feet,
And first through boyish senses ran
The pulse of love which made me man.
The handmaid of her father's cheer,
With timid grace she glided near,
And, lightly dropping on her knee,
Held out a silver zerf to me,
Within whose cup the fragrance sent
From Yemen's sunburnt berries blent
With odors of the Persian rose.
That picture still in memory glows
With the same heat as then, — the gush
Of fever, with its fiery flush
Startling my blood; and I can see —
As she this moment knelt to me —
The shrouded graces of her form;
The half-seen arm, so round and warm;
The little hand, whose tender veins
Branched through the henna's orange stains;
The head, in act of offering bent;

And through the parted veil, which lent
A charm for what it hid, the eye,
Gazelle-like, large, and dark, and shy,
That with a soft, sweet tremble shone
Beneath the fervor of my own,
Yet could not, would not, turn away
The fascination of its ray,
But half in pleasure, half in fright,
Grew unto mine, and builded bright
From heart to heart a bridge of light.

IV.

From the fond trouble of my look
The zerf within her fingers shook,
As with a start, like one who breaks
Some happy trance of thought, and wakes
Unto forgotten toil, she rose
And passed. I saw the curtains close
Behind her steps: the light was gone,
But in the dark my heart dreamed on.
Some random words — thanks ill expressed —
I to the stately Shekh addressed,
With the intelligence which he,
My host, could not demand of me;
How, wandering in the desert chase,
I spied from far his camping-place,
And Arab honor bade me halt
To break his bread and share his salt.
Thereto, fit reverence for his name,
The praise our speech is quick to frame,
Which, empty though it seem, was dear
To the old warrior's willing ear,
And led his thoughts, by many a track,
To deeds of ancient prowess back,
Until my love could safely hide
Beneath the covert of his pride.

And when his "Go with God!" was said,
Upon El-Azrek's back I sped
Into the desert, wide and far,
Beneath the silver evening-star,
And, fierce with passion, without heed
Urged o'er the sands my snorting steed
As if those afrites, feared of man, —
Who watch the lonely caravan,
And, if a loiterer lags behind,
Efface its tracks with sudden wind,
Then fill the air with cheating cries,
And make false pictures to his eyes
Till the bewildered sufferer dies, —
Had breathed on me their demon breath,
And spurred me to the hunt of Death.

v.

Yet madness such as this was worth
All the cool wisdom of the earth,
And sweeter glowed its wild unrest
Than the old calm of brain and breast.
The image of that maiden beamed
Through all I saw, or thought, or dreamed,
Till she became, like Light or Air,
A part of life. And she shall share,
I vowed, my passion and my fate,
Or both shall fail me, soon or late,
In the vain effort to possess;
For Life lives only in success.
I could not, in her father's sight,
Purchase the hand which was his right;
And well I knew how quick denied
The prayer would be to empty pride;
But Heaven and Earth shall sooner move
Than bar the energy of Love.

The sinews of my life became
Obedient to that single aim,
And desperate deed and patient thought
Together in its service wrought.
Keen as a falcon, when his eye
In search of quarry reads the sky,
I stole unseen, at eventide,
Behind the well, upon whose side
The girls their jars of water leaned.
By one long, sandy hillock screened,
I watched the forms that went and came,
With eyes that sparkled with the flame
Up from my heart in flashes sent,
As one by one they came and went
Amid the sunset radiance cast
On the red sands: they came and passed,
And she, — thank God! — she came at last!

VI.

Then, while her fair companion bound
The cord her pitcher's throat around,
And steadied with a careful hand
Its slow descent, upon the sand
At the Shekh's daughter's feet, I sped
A slender arrow, shaft and head
With breathing jasmine-flowers entwined,
And roses such as on the wind
Of evening with rich odors fan
The white kiosks of Ispahan.
A moment, fired with love and hope,
I stayed upon the yellow slope
El-Azrek's hoofs, to see her raise
Her startled eyes in sweet amaze, —
To see her make the unconscious sign
Which recognized the gift as mine,
And place, before she turned to part,
The flowery barb against her heart.

VII.

Again the Shekh's divan I pressed:
The jasmine pipe was brought the guest,
And Mariam, lovelier than before,
Knelt with the steamy cup once more.
O bliss! within those eyes to see
A soul of love look out on me,—
A fount of passion, which is *truth*
In the wild dialect of Youth,—
Whose rich abundance is outpoured
Like worship at a shrine adored,
And on its rising deluge bears
The heart to raptures or despairs.
While from the cup the zerf contained
The foamy amber juice I drained,
A rose-bud in the zerf expressed
The sweet confession of her breast.
One glance of glad intelligence,
And silently she glided thence.
"O Shekh!" I cried, as she withdrew,
(Short is the speech where hearts are true,)
"Thou hast a daughter; let me be
A shield to her, a sword to thee!"
Abdallah turned his steady eye
Full on my face, and made reply:
"It cannot be. The treasure sent
By God must not be idly spent.
Strong men there are, in service tried,
Who seek the maiden for a bride;
And shall I slight their worth and truth
To feed the passing flame of youth?"

VIII.

"No passing flame!" my answer ran;
"But love which is the life of man,

Warmed with his blood, fed by his breath,
And, when it fails him, leaves but Death.
O Shekh, I hoped not thy consent;
But having tasted in thy tent
An Arab welcome, shared thy bread,
I come to warn thee I shall wed
Thy daughter, though her suitors be
As leaves upon the tamarind-tree.
Guard her as thou mayst guard, I swear
No other bed than mine shall wear
Her virgin honors, and thy race
Through me shall keep its ancient place.
Thou'rt warned, and duty bids no more;
For, when I next approach thy door,
Her child shall intercessor be
To build up peace 'twixt thee and me."
A little flushed my boyish brow;
But calmly then I spake, as now.
The Shekh, with dignity that flung
Rebuke on my impetuous tongue,
Replied: "The young man's hopes are fair;
The young man's blood would all things dare.
But age is wisdom, and can bring
Confusion on the soaring wing
Of reckless youth. Thy words are just,
But needless; for I still can trust
A father's jealousy to shield
From robber grasp the gem concealed
Within his tent, till he may yield
To fitting hands the precious store.
Go, then, in peace; but come no more."

IX.

My only sequin served to bribe
A cunning mother of the tribe

To Mariam's mind my plan to bring.
A feather of the wild dove's wing,
A lock of raven gloss and stain
Sheared from El-Azrek's flowing mane
And that pale flower whose fragrant cup
Is closed until the moon comes up, —
But then a tenderer beauty holds
Than any flower the sun unfolds, —
Declared my purpose. Her reply
Let loose the wings of ecstasy:
Two roses and the moonlight flower
Told the acceptance, and the hour, —
Two daily suns to waste their glow,
And then, at moonrise, bliss — or woe.

X.

El-Azrek now, on whom alone
The burden of our fate was thrown,
Claimed from my hands a double meed
Of careful training for the deed.
I gave him of my choicest store, —
No guest was ever honored more.
With flesh of kid, with whitest bread
And dates of Egypt was he fed;
The camel's heavy udders gave
Their frothy juice his thirst to lave:
A charger, groomed with better care,
The Sultan never rode to prayer.
My burning hope, my torturing fear,
I breathed in his sagacious ear;
Caressed him as a brother might,
Implored his utmost speed in flight,
Hung on his neck with many a vow,
And kissed the white star on his brow.
His large and lustrous eyeball sent
A look which made me confident,

As if in me some doubt he spied,
And met it with a human pride.
"Enough: I trust thee. 'Tis the hour,
And I have need of all thy power.
Without a wing, God gives thee wings,
And Fortune to thy forelock clings."

XI.

The yellow moon was rising large
Above the Desert's dusky marge,
And save the jackal's whining moan,
Or distant camel's gurgling groan,
And the lamenting monotone
Of winds that breathe their vain desire
And on the lonely sands expire,
A silent charm, a breathless spell,
Waited with me beside the well.
She is not there, — not yet, — but soon
A white robe glimmers in the moon.
Her little footsteps make no sound
On the soft sand; and with a bound,
Where terror, doubt, and love unite
To blind her heart to all but flight,
Trembling, and panting, and oppressed,
She threw herself upon my breast.
By Allah! like a bath of flame
The seething blood tumultuous came
From life's hot centre as I drew
Her mouth to mine: our spirits grew
Together in one long, long kiss, —
One swooning, speechless pulse of bliss
That, throbbing from the heart's core met
In the united lips. Oh, yet
The eternal sweetness of that draught
Renews the thirst with which I quaffed

Love's virgin vintage: starry fire
Leapt from the twilights of desire,
And in the golden dawn of dreams
The space grew warm with radiant beams,
Which from that kiss streamed o'er a sea
Of rapture, in whose bosom we
Sank down, and sank eternally.

XII.

Now nerve thy limbs, El-Azrek! Fling
Thy head aloft, and like a wing
Spread on the wind thy cloudy mane!
The hunt is up: their stallions strain
The urgent shoulders close behind,
And the wide nostril drinks the wind.
But thou art, too, of Nedjid's breed,
My brother! and the falcon's speed
Slant down the storm's advancing line
Would laggard be if matched with thine.
Still leaping forward, whistling through
The moonlight-laden air, we flew;
And from the distance, threateningly,
Came the pursuer's eager cry.
Still forward, forward, stretched our flight
Through the long hours of middle night;
One after one the followers lagged,
And even my faithful Azrek flagged
Beneath his double burden, till
The streaks of dawn began to fill
The East, and freshening in the race,
Their goaded horses gained apace.
I drew my dagger, cut the girth,
Tumbled my saddle to the earth,
And clasped with desperate energies
My stallion's side with iron knees;

While Mariam, clinging to my breast,
The closer for that peril pressed.
They come! they come! Their shouts we hear,
Now faint and far, now fierce and near.
O brave El-Azrek! on the track
Let not one fainting sinew slack,
Or know thine agony of flight
Endured in vain! The purple light
Of breaking morn has come at last.
O joy! the thirty leagues are past;
And, gleaming in the sunrise, see,
The white tents of the Aneyzee!
The warriors of the waste, the foes
Of Shekh Abdallah's tribe, are those
Whose shelter and support I claim,
Which they bestow in Allah's name;
While, wheeling back, the baffled few
No longer venture to pursue.

XIII.

And now, O Frank! if you would see
How soft the eyes that looked on me
Through Mariam's silky lashes, scan
Those of my little Solyman.
And should you marvel if the child
His stately grandsire reconciled
To that bold theft, when years had brought
The golden portion which he sought,
And what upon this theme befell,
The Shekh himself can better tell.

I. Meaning of "Frank." What contrast is drawn between Eastern and Western methods of love-making? What is the office of the poet? II. Why is the veiled face of Eastern maids to be preferred? Why does he pay such a tribute to the beauty of the eyes and the significance of their glances? How much of love can they express? III. Who was Amram? What were his cir-

cumstances? Describe the instance of Eastern hospitality. What caused the maiden to appear? Who was she? What were her charms? How did the guest show his emotion? How did the maiden respond? IV. What was the maiden's behavior? Is the guest's heart touched? Does he attach importance to it? What does he do? V. Does he enjoy his "madness"? What is his resolution? How does he proceed to carry it out? VI. How does he declare his love? How is it accepted? VII. Why does he visit the Shekh again? How is he repaid? How does Mariam confess her love? Tell the meaning of the brief poetic request of the lover. Why does the Shekh refuse? VIII. How does the lover resent the imputation upon the permanence of the flame? Is he discouraged by the answer he gets? Why does he warn the Shekh? Is the Shekh afraid? IX. How does he propose a plan of elopement to Mariam? What is the plan? Does she understand? Does she accept? How does she indicate the time? X. Why does he caress his horse? XI. When do they meet? How do they meet? What have these lovers said to each other? Does it seem necessary that anything should have been said? Does the courtship seem to have been more or less poetic than the conventional ones of Western civilization? XII. Describe the pursuit. XIII. Are all satisfied?

Mention the peculiar customs you notice. How does the poet produce the Arabian atmosphere? Does the poet feel the life as well as he sees it? Does the artist or the man speak first in selecting this theme? Select the sentiments in regard to love. Which do you prefer? Which of the thirteen parts do you think most beautiful? Characterize the love shown here with all the adjectives that seem appropriate.

## THE QUAKER WIDOW.

I.

Thee finds me in the garden, Hannah, — come in! 'Tis kind of thee
To wait until the Friends were gone, who came to comfort me.
The still and quiet company a peace may give, indeed,
But blessed is the single heart that comes to us at need.

II.

Come, sit thee down! Here is the bench where Benjamin would sit
On First-day afternoons in spring, and watch the swallows flit:
He loved to smell the sprouting box, and hear the pleasant bees
Go humming round the lilacs and through the apple-trees.

III.

I think he loved the spring: not that he cared for flowers: most men
Think such things foolishness, — but we were first acquainted then,
One spring: the next he spoke his mind; the third I was his wife,
And in the spring (it happened so) our children entered life.

IV.

He was but seventy-five: I did not think to lay him yet
In Kennett graveyard, where at Monthly Meeting first we met.
The Father's mercy shows in this: 'tis better I should be
Picked out to bear the heavy cross — alone in age — than he.

V.

We've lived together fifty years: it seems but one long day,
One quiet Sabbath of the heart, till he was called away;
And as we bring from Meeting-time a sweet contentment home,
So, Hannah, I have store of peace for all the days to come.

VI.

I mind (for I can tell thee now) how hard it was to know
If I had heard the spirit right, that told me I should go;
For father had a deep concern upon his mind that day,
But mother spoke for Benjamin, — she knew what best to say.

VII.

Then she was still: they sat awhile: at last she spoke again,
"The Lord incline thee to the right!" and "Thou shalt have him, Jane!"
My father said. I cried. Indeed, 'twas not the least of shocks,
For Benjamin was Hicksite, and father Orthodox.

VIII.

I thought of this ten years ago, when daughter Ruth we lost:
Her husband's of the world, and yet I could not see her crossed.
She wears, thee knows, the gayest gowns, she hears a hireling priest —
Ah, dear! the cross was ours: her life's a happy one, at least.

IX.

Perhaps she'll wear a plainer dress when she's as old as I, —
Would thee believe it, Hannah? once *I* felt temptation nigh!
My wedding-gown was ashen silk, too simple for my taste:
I wanted lace around the neck, and a ribbon at the waist.

X.

How strange it seemed to sit with him upon the woman's side!
I did not dare to lift my eyes: I felt more fear than pride,
Till, "in the presence of the Lord," he said, and then there came
A holy strength upon my heart, and I could say the same.

XI.

I used to blush when he came near, but then I showed no sign;
With all the meeting looking on, I held his hand in mine.
It seemed my bashfulness was gone, now I was his for life:
Thee knows the feeling, Hannah, — thee, too, hast been a wife.

XII.

As home we rode, I saw no fields look half so green as ours;
The woods were coming into leaf, the meadows full of flowers;
The neighbors met us in the lane, and every face was kind, —
'Tis strange how lively everything comes back upon my mind.

XIII.

I see, as plain as thee sits there, the wedding-dinner spread:
At our own table we were guests, with father at the head,
And Dinah Passmore helped us both, — 'twas she stood up with me,
And Abner Jones with Benjamin, — and now they're gone, all three!

XIV.

It is not right to wish for death; the Lord disposes best.
His Spirit comes to quiet hearts, and fits them for His rest;
And that He halved our little flock was merciful, I see:
For Benjamin has two in heaven, and two are left with me.

XV.

Eusebius never cared to farm, — 'twas not his call, in truth,
And I must rent the dear old place, and go to daughter Ruth.
Thee'll say her ways are not like mine, — young people nowadays
Have fallen sadly off, I think, from all the good old ways.

XVI.

But Ruth is still a Friend at heart; she keeps the simple tongue,
The cheerful, kindly nature we loved when she was young;
And it was brought upon my mind, remembering her, of late,
That we on dress and outward things perhaps lay too much weight.

XVII.

I once heard Jesse Kersey say, a spirit clothed with grace,
And pure, almost, as angels are, may have a homely face.
And dress may be of less account: the Lord will look within:
The soul it is that testifies of righteousness or sin.

XVIII.

Thee mustn't be too hard on Ruth: she's anxious I should go,
And she will do her duty as a daughter should, I know.
'Tis hard to change so late in life, but we must be resigned:
The Lord looks down contentedly upon a willing mind.

Notice the great contrast between this love story and "Amran's Wooing." Any romance, color or adventure connected with this courtship? What was the only objection to the lover? How is the intensity of the bride's joy shown through her quiet manner? What has happened to the family? To whom is she talking? About what? What spirit does she show? How is the Quaker atmosphere produced? Characterize the love shown here with all the adjectives that seem appropriate.

LARS.

[This poem can be bought in No. 16 of the "Riverside Literature Series" for 15 cents.]

This idyl ranks with the best produced in this country and therefore deserves careful study. Read it in class with comments, questions and explanations. Reproduce it in your own language. Compare it in motives, characters, situations and environment with Longfellow's "Evangeline" (No. 1, "Riv. Lit. Series").

**General.** — What books of travel has the author written? Have you read any of them? What qualities do they show? What novels has he written? Give an outline of any you have read. Select and study his narrative poems. Do you find any American poet excelling him in this field? Where are the scenes usually laid? Which division of the complete edition of the poems do you think most characteristic? What motive predominates in his lyrics? Do you find a variety of lyrical motives? Of lyrical measures? Do you find poems upon slavery? Upon patriotism? Compare his "National Ode" with Lanier's "From this Hundred Terraced Height" and Lowell's "Commemoration Ode."

**Henry Timrod** (1829–1867) wrote a volume of poems which was edited by Hayne. Timrod's verse is more passionate than Hayne's, though less catholic in its scope. His war lyrics move in a musical and impetuous measure: in a quieter vein is his delicate and spontaneously fanciful "Spring in South Carolina."

**Abram J. Ryan** (1840–1886) was born in Ireland, but was reared in the South, and conceived a warm attachment to his adopted land. He has been called the "Laureate of the Lost Cause." Some of the best of his poems find their motive in the events of the Civil War. "The Sword of Robert Lee" rings like the battle-cry of those whom he led; "The Conquered Banner" is an eloquent lament over defeat. Others of his pieces picture his sympathetic delight in the semi-tropical scenery of his South-

ern home: and he has also written much verse of an elevated spiritual and religious character.

**William Gilmore Simms** (1816–1870), **John Esten Cooke** (1830–1886), **John Pendleton Kennedy** (1795–1870), **Paul Hayne** (1831–1886), are a few of the names of Southern writers who attained eminence. We have been hearing more from the South of late, and are likely to hear more yet in the future: indeed, it is more than possible that another generation may find us receiving our best literature from that part of our country. But in the South, before the war, literature was an almost discredited profession, and it required some genius and more courage to venture to write at all. To be a literary man by profession was rare indeed: most Southern authors of this period followed other callings for a livelihood: lawyers, especially, showed a tendency to dabble in literature in their idle moments. Men of commanding genius were plentiful in the Southern States: but their genius was applied to other matters than the multiplying of books. They were statesmen, orators, jurists, planters, but not writers. Nor was the reading class sufficiently large and constant to support writers, had there been many of them.

**A Southern galaxy.**

Simms himself began life as a lawyer, but the literary instinct proved too strong for him, and, to his own financial cost, he yielded to it. He was a versatile and diligent author, engaging in many branches of literary work. Of all that he did, his novels alone survive, and even they belong to a style of romance no longer in vogue. They are modelled upon the lines laid down by Sir Walter Scott, and are full of intrigue, incident and action, with a Southern historical background. Their faults are largely due to the time and conditions in which Simms wrote; he deserves credit for his vigorous effort to found a Southern literature. John Esten Cooke, of Virginia, was almost as industrious as Simms, and showed a finer quality of imagination. His "The Virginia Comedians" is a good novel, surpassing

**Simms the founder.**

**Cooke the Virginia chronicler.**

Simms's "Yemassee," and fairly meriting the reputation of being the best ante-bellum story published in the South. Both writers missed an opportunity by not describing Southern life as it was at the time they wrote — a mistake not made by later authors of that region. They wrote good English, they ardently loved their country and they recognized the artistic value of their materials; but they failed to take the best advantage of them. Kennedy, the friend of Poe, was born in Baltimore, and was famous as the author of "Swallow Barn" before Poe took the prize offered by the "Saturday Visitor" with his "Manuscript found in a Bottle." "Swallow Barn" is a quiet and agreeable story of country life in Virginia, and it has remained the most popular of Kennedy's novels. He was a lawyer by profession, and once filled a post in the Cabinet at Washington. Paul Hamilton Hayne was a poet exclusively, and, with the exception of Poe, was the truest poet of the South. A selection of his best productions would show verses, and entire poems, not unworthy to be compared with any save the very best written in this country. He did not sufficiently concentrate his powers: but the music and loveliness of his quieter pieces, and the passionate emotion of his war-lyrics, win the heart and stir the pulse. South Carolina and Georgia have found no laureate so sympathetic and eloquent as he. Among his best poems are "The Pine's Mystery," "Forecastings," the sonnet "Earth Odors after Rain," the historical lyric "The Battle of King's Mountain," and the dramatic sketch "Antonio Melidori."

**Kennedy and "Swallow Barn."**

**Hayne the poet.**

Other Southern writers who may be mentioned in this place are **William Wirt,** author of "Life of Patrick Henry"; **Charles Étienne Gayarré,** historian and dramatist; **Augustus B. Longstreet,** author of "Georgia Scenes"; **Richard Henry Wilde,** who wrote the poem "My Life is like the Summer Rose"; **Joseph G. Baldwin,** who wrote "Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi"; and the well-known woman novelists, **Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth** and **Miss Augusta J. Evans.**

**Some minor writers.**

The name of **Edmund Quincy** (1808–1877) appears only in the more exhaustive of our literary anthologies; yet it designates

one of the most charming writers as well as the most reticent novelist in the United States. He was the son of Josiah Quincy, president of Harvard College, and its historian. Edmund, who graduated from Harvard in 1827, was a man of fine scholarship, a gentleman of the purest type, a refined but genuine humorist. The chief energies of his life were devoted to the anti-slavery cause, and his writings on this subject would fill many volumes. But to literature proper his contributions were, as has been intimated, exceeding few. He wrote but a single novel — "Wensley" — a volume of less than two hundred and fifty short pages; and in addition some half-dozen brief stories. "Wensley" overflows with delicate and spontaneous humor; it is written in a style of cultivated and spontaneous colloquialism: the characterization is distinct and admirable, the literary quality incontestable, and the story itself, though conceived in the quiet key of the novels of Jane Austen, has an absorbing interest. The shorter sketches are not less charming on a small scale.

**Numerous writers of lesser fame.**

We may conclude this chapter with the names of **Donald G. Mitchell** ("Ik Marvel") (1822–), author of "Reveries of a Bachelor" and "Dream-Life," and of many popular books for boys; **Richard B. Kimball** (1816–1892), author of "St. Leger"; **J. R. Gilmore** ("Edward Kirke") (1823–), author of "Among the Pines," and other stories of the Civil War; **Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney** (1824–), author of "Faith Gartney's Girlhood"; **John G. Saxe** (1816–1887), a humorous and satirical poet of the better class, author of "The Proud Miss McBride," and "The Rhyme of the Rail"; and **George H. Boker** (1824–1890), a poet and a successful dramatist, whose play of "Francesca di Rimini" was recently revived by Lawrence Barrett, the actor, and was received with popular favor.

## X.

## THE INNOVATORS.

THE period we have just been considering is an anomalous one, and should be regarded from the point of view of state rather than of time, including as it does writers and writings not of the first class, though contemporary with some that were so. The writers in question neither attained the highest excellence, nor did any of them indicate a new departure from established models and precedents. They were repetitions, on a minor scale, of what was in existence, or had existed. But, in due course, the hour arrived when a fresh element was to make its appearance.

**A fresh element.**

This element presented itself under several outwardly differing forms, and can be credited to no particular person or event. It was due to the natural progress of the mysterious law of growth which affects literature, science and society alike, and is, after all, the real basis of progress. The nominal individuals who illustrate or express it are comparatively unimportant, though they will always and necessarily be associated with it: they are often arrayed in seeming opposition to one another; and occasionally one or other of them may chip the egg, as it were, some while before the ear of the world is attuned to hear him peep. Walt Whitman — to use an apposite example — published his "Leaves of Grass" in 1855: but the public was not then in a mood seriously to consider his claims, and nearly twenty years passed before he was competently criticised. Bret Harte, on the contrary, raised his voice precisely at the right moment: he came so pat to the new dispensation that he was identified with it. Frank Stockton, again, though a little behind time in his arrival, should yet be included among the innovators.

We can judge of the importance of this departure by reflecting how impossible it would be to go back to the point at which it found us. The new writers themselves have not, perhaps, taught us much; but, in one way or another, the literary world has accomplished a marked growth in the past twenty years. The old order changes, giving place to new. The great writers of the past are not, of course, superseded; they are intrinsically absolute; in advance of or aside from the general growth. But the general average of quality advances, and the work of the hack-writer becomes, in point of technique and handling, as good as that of the men of talent of a generation ago.

**The step we have taken.**

**Francis Bret Harte** (1839–) was born in Albany, New York, the son of a man of fine education, who taught school for a living. After leaving school, Harte, at the age of seventeen, journeyed to California in quest of fortune. At first he followed in his father's footsteps as a school-teacher; afterwards he took his turn in the mines; later still he got a job as compositor in a printing-office; and finally undertook the editing of a local newspaper. From editing the contributions of other writers, he naturally proceeded to printing articles and sketches of his own; and thus insensibly entered upon a literary career. In 1867 he published a small volume of "Condensed Novels" — terse parodies of the work of leading novelists of Europe and America. The following year he was connected with a famous California magazine, — "The Overland Monthly," — and in its pages were published the tales that made him speedily known to the English-speaking world as a new genius in literature. In 1870

**History of a brilliant innovator.**

Francis Bret Harte.

he came to Boston, and for a time was under contract with Fields, Osgood & Co., at a salary of ten thousand dollars a year, to write for "The Atlantic Monthly" exclusively. A few years later he received an appointment as consul to Crefeld in Germany, but was subsequently transferred to the more lucrative post of Glasgow, in Scotland. He spent most of his time in London, and was a social favorite there: his writings have always had a large English market. He still lives in England, writing, at irregular intervals, stories and short novels, usually with a Californian background.

Harte has strong and sympathetic powers of observation, keen dramatic instinct, ready humor and a point of view that is liberal to the limits of conventionality, or beyond them. The sudden change, while he was yet a boy, from the strictness and narrowness of his home surroundings, to the absolute lawlessness and irregularity of western life, produced a profound impression upon him, never to be effaced. His earliest essays in literature — conceived, probably, on hackneyed lines — were according to his own account unsuccessful: but he was not long in declaring his independence, though a flavor of Dickens is still occasionally perceptible in his work. But his essential separateness is indicated by the extraordinary accuracy with which, in the "Condensed Novels," he caught the very spirit of the style of thought and language of a dozen different writers. His own style, as finally formed, leaves little to be desired; it is clear, flexible, virile, laconic and withal graceful. Its full meaning is given to every word, and occasionally, like all original masters of prose, he imparts into a familiar word a racier significance than it had possessed before. His genius is nowhere more unmistakable than in the handling of his stories, which are terse to the point of severity, yet wholly adequate; everything necessary to the matter in hand is told, but with an economy of word and phrase that betokens a powerful and radical conception. Nothing in his plots or characters is conventional; they are aspects of genuine life, selected and seen with surpassing skill and insight. No time is wasted in intro-

**Quality of his stories.**

ductions, explanations or analyses: the reader is conveyed at once to the centre of dramatic interest, and is kept there till the end. Character is his special quarry: he puts a human type before us in a few shaping strokes, and never afterwards lays on a touch amiss, or lapses into an inconsistency. But his brief descriptions of scenery and of action are vivid and comprehensive; they interpret or enhance, but never delay or confuse the dramatic issue. His humor is subtle and contagious, though not always entirely legitimate; he is too apt to poke fun at his characters — to archly and demurely comment upon their oddities and absurdities — instead of allowing them to work out their own comicality. This is a trick derived from Dickens, and not altogether a desirable one.

The first success of Harte's stories was no doubt due in part to the novelty of the scenes and characters that he described. The men of '49 had left civilization behind them, and lived for several years in circumstances that brought to the surface the elemental good and evil of human nature. They took all laws into their own hands, and their only judge was Judge Lynch. They experienced alternately the extremes of poverty and affluence; they worked and slept with danger and death for companions. Traces of a barbaric and capricious sort of chivalry occasionally were visible in them, side by side with remorseless cruelty and savage excesses. Men of education and good breeding mingled with men who had been ruffians from the cradle, and the former often proved themselves the greater ruffians of the two. Women were scarce in these wild camps, and they became not less reckless and desperate than their mates. All this constituted splendid material for the romancer, and Harte showed his appreciation of it by depicting its characteristic phases precisely as they appeared to him. The squalid, the base, the wicked elements of the picture are presented with unflinching veracity: but he also sought out and reproduced the gleams of brightness in the dark — the nobility of self-abnegation, and the passion of love; the fierce courage that faced death with a jest; even the delicate tact which sometimes made lovely the manifestations of those rugged natures, as

wild flowers soften the stern face of the rock. He portrayed, in short, the inextricable intertwining of good and evil in man; so that the unspoken moral of all his stories is a deeper and more reverent charity. It was not a new message, but it was conveyed in a new voice, with fresh illustrations; and it had its effect, not on literature only, but on the human heart.

All this was done within the compass of some fifty printed pages. Harte's first half-dozen stories were his best, and they also contained the elements of everything of consequence that he has written since. His canvas was as narrow as it was brilliant. But it would be difficult to praise these half-dozen stories too highly. It is difficult to see how they would have been done better: as a matter of fact, nothing of the kind has ever been better done. "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" is so nearly perfect that criticism may be challenged to point out a sentence in it that could profitably be altered. It may be read in a few minutes, and not forgotten in a lifetime. "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "Miggles," "Tennessee's Partner," "Brown of Calavaras," "How Santa Clause came to Simpson's Bar," — these are scarcely inferior in conception and workmanship. No lesser word than genius describes such work as this: and lapse of time, nor competition, nor even less meritorious work of his own, can lessen Harte's renown for these achievements.

It would have been well for him, indeed, had he never written anything else than those early stories. He had run his course, and thereafter he could only go over the same ground again with flagging energies and wavering purpose. The epic of the Argonauts was a great epic, but it could be sung effectively but once. The material was magnificent, but it was strictly limited. And Harte's genius seems to have been competent to nothing else. The few tales of his whose background and characters were other than Californian were comparative failures. Nor could he do so well on a larger scale than that of the short story. His novel of "Gabriel Conroy," of which much was hoped, turned out to be a mere succession of episodes, whose combination weakened instead of strengthening their general effect. His subsequent pro-

ductions, though never destitute of value, have not the supreme merit of his first group. And the moral perversity of his characters, which served but as artistic shadows in his briefer narratives, became predominant and painful in the longer works.

Beside his prose writings, Harte is the author of a considerable body of poetry, scarcely less original in its character, and often powerful, dramatic and touching; though much of it depends for its popularity upon eccentric and rather extravagant humor. The best-known example of the latter type is "The Heathen Chinee," composed in a whimsical moment, and inserted by the author to fill up an unfinished column. It instantly caught the fancy of the nation, and doubtless no poem of the generation is so widely known. Harte makes a free use of the California dialect in his verse, and may be regarded as the originator of a dialect poetry that has latterly attained so overwhelming a vogue. Lowell's "Biglow Papers," witty and clever though they were, never stimulated the imitation that has followed Harte.

A volume of moderate dimensions will contain all that posterity is likely to preserve of Harte's work; but the volume will stand on a level with the best literary product of the nation.

**Cincinnatus Hiner ("Joaquin") Miller** (1841–). The mark of Harte's literary style is its maturity, self-poise and worldly sagacity; that of Miller's is its almost childlike spontaneity and impetuous artlessness. Miller's temperament is essentially passionate and juvenile: his intellect is under the dominion of his emotions: his thought is colored by his loves and hates. This coloring is always warm, and sometimes gorgeous to the point of being barbaric. He has not Harte's distinctness and deliberation of touch; he is always in movement, and his scenes and persons are enveloped in a vague and sumptuous atmosphere. He cares little for form and outline in comparison with quality and feeling. He is a born poet in his own [illegible]n of poetry, though his genius was hampered by extraneous [illegible]stances.

**A spontaneous poet.**

[illegible]r was born in Indiana, but accompanied his father to Ore-

gon in 1853, and for a time worked on a farm there. Agriculture, however, was not to his taste, and schooling probably still less so: his only education consisted in reading the few books that came in his way, among which a volume of Byron was his favorite. At the age of sixteen he left his home and went to California, where he labored as a miner. A little later he formed one of the band of adventurers that followed Walker to Nicaragua: and for a time he joined a tribe of Indians, and lived with them as one of themselves. After four years of a hazardous and romantic existence he found his way back to Oregon, and began, at the age of twenty, the study of law. But this in turn was thrown aside, and for a year he rode between the gold-districts of Idaho as express-messenger for the mining-camps. A little later he was editing a weekly newspaper: in 1866 he was elected judge in Eastern Oregon, and kept the bench for four years. It was at this epoch that he began to be known as a poet, though he had composed rhymes from an early period, and, like Homer, had recited them to his frontier companions. But in 1870 his "Songs of the Sierras" were published in a volume, and attracted immediate notice both in this country and in England. So emphatic, indeed, was the English voice of approval, that Miller was encouraged to sail for Europe.

**Biographical.**

His success in London, both literary and social, was phenomenal. His books sold by thousands; he was a welcome guest at the best houses, and he made many cordial and life-long friends. He was regarded as a characteristic American product, and was, perhaps, occasionally tempted humorously to indulge the fancy of his entertainers. But Miller was a genuine man and poet beneath all his affectations. Critics sought in his poetry for things that were not to be found there, and presently came to the conclusion that he lacked culture — a discovery that could hardly have surprised a man who had lived the life of a frontiersman for thirty years, whose study had been the plains and the mountains, and his easy-chair the saddle. His poetry showed the influence of Byron and of Swinburne, but his native genius, at its best, was too strong to be controlled by any master;

**His native genius.**

the very ecstasy of the poetic gift is in many of his verses. Had he been more thoroughly educated, he might have done better or more even work; but, on the other hand, academic learning might have robbed his productions of the wilding flavor that is one of their chief charms. Miller is one of the most picturesque and agreeable figures in our literature; he fills a place of his own, and, with Harte, has given California a literary showing of which she has reason to be proud.

Besides the volume already mentioned, he has published "Songs of the Sunlands," "Songs of the Mexican Seas," "Songs of the Desert," "Songs of Italy." In prose he has written a romantic narrative, "The Modocs," "The One Fair Woman," "The Danites in the Sierras," and a play founded on the last-named work, called "The Danites." Miller, after his return from abroad, worked as a journalist in Washington and New York; but in 1887 he removed to Oakland in California, where he still lives.

**Henry James** (1843–). There could hardly be a contrast greater than that between Henry James and the two authors just described. The differences include character, training, circumstances and associations, as well as literary method and point of view. Yet James is an innovator not less than are Miller and Harte; nay, his innovations are more radical, as they certainly are more deliberate and self-conscious than theirs. The history of his mental development is a history of gradual growth, determined in certain directions by reflection and conscientious judgment. He has always held himself securely in hand. His talent, though amounting at times to genius, never has carried him off his feet. He subjects it to his own pre-arranged purposes, without ever permitting it to lead or master him. From his earliest beginnings he has gone forward heedfully, step by step, taking daily observations of his position, like a careful mariner, trying now this course and now that, not whimsically nor recklessly, but with the serious resolve to reach the goal which seemed to him the properest and most expedient. Never arrogant nor headstrong, his mind is

**A self-conscious narrator.**

nevertheless intrepid and independent; he reverences no master nor method, however conventionally or popularly exalted, that does not command his sheer intellectual respect. He criticises both himself and others in the driest light, without softness and without severity. He aims to reach the unbiassed truth, be it inviting or otherwise, and to follow his convictions as to what is right in literature, without concerning himself to inquire whether what is right is also popular and remunerative. James is a man of high intelligence, of fastidious culture, and of wide experience of civilized life; and the results that he has attained are worthy of serious and respectful attention.

Henry James was born in New York, the oldest of four brothers. His father was a man of singular intellectual power, and gifted with rare faculty and force of literary expression; but in point of style there is no resemblance between the father and the son. The latter's health was delicate, and has never become robust; he was educated at home by tutors, and never attended the university. While still a boy he was taken to Europe, and remained there several years. Returning home (to Boston), he was barely twenty when his first story was printed in "The Atlantic Monthly." It was in two numbers, and was an analysis of female character, conveyed in the form of extracts from the diary of the male character. It was a clever though not an exhilarating performance. It was followed by a novel, "Watch and Ward," in which analysis and comment are much more conspicuous than action or dialogue, but which showed solid literary qualities. There was never any question in James's mind as to what profession he should adopt. He was from the first determined upon literature.

**His history.**

Though far from being a rich man, James had a small competence, which enabled him to exist apart from the emoluments derived from his literary work, which, for the first fifteen years of his career, amounted practically to nothing. He wrote for the love of writing, winning the commendation of a few intelligent persons, but quite unknown to the general public. He frequently visited Europe, living in France, Italy and London; and by

degrees his visits became longer, and his home-returns more brief. It was not until 1878 that the appearance of "The American" and "Daisy Miller" brought him into general notice. From that time he has obtained adequate remuneration for his books, which have first been printed serially in "The Century," "The Atlantic," "Harper's," and in some of the leading English magazines. "The Portrait of a Lady," "Princess Casamassima," "The Bostonians," and "The Tragedians" are names of his principal novels published since 1880. In 1878 appeared a collection of able criticisms of French writers, under the title of "French Poets and Novelists." This volume established Mr. James's title to be considered one of our keenest and most agreeable critics.

**An early tendency toward romance.**

The longest of Mr. James's earlier works is "Roderick Hudson," published in 1875; but a large number of his short stories has been collected in volumes under various titles. It is in these that the course of his development is to be traced. After obtaining some mastery of the technical part of his profession, he showed a leaning towards romance in the conception of his stories. "The Madonna of the Future," for example, while keeping near reality on one side, is on the other fanciful and ideal. But the fine taste of the writer presently warned him that realistic characters should not be forced to work out an ideal destiny. It was necessary either to follow Hawthorne in idealizing both persons and plot, and so produce an artistic harmony, or else the stories must be made realistic throughout. Debating this alternation, he hung in the wind for a while; but by degrees he turned towards the latter course, his choice being, perhaps, somewhat influenced by the novels of the great Russian, Turgeneff, and by the subtle example of the contemporary French school.

It is not, however, in the "realism" of his characters, nor in the fidelity of his descriptions, nor in the conscientious minuteness of his analysis of human motives that James is distinctively an innovator. These things are incidental merely, and have their source in his temperament and in the quality of his intellect. Still less can he be classified as the inventor of "the

international novel"; for though he has been the most noticeable exponent of such stories, and may have been the first to write such, their value and significance to him has been solely that a better basis was thereby afforded to emphasize distinctions of character and environment. Americans and foreigners naturally criticise one another, and appear to one another in their differences rather than in their similarities; and in so far relieve the novelist who makes his story out of them from the necessity of analyzing them in his own person. The situation becomes lighter and more dramatic. But to suppose that national unlikenesses are, in themselves, interesting to James, is to misinterpret his position. His standpoint is purely the literary one: American and English are indifferent to him.

**The real innovation.**

No: James's real innovation, or invention, lies in the character of the narrative that he offers. Studying life, diligently and attentively, he failed to find in it the "stories" — the dramatic circle of events, beginning, culminating and ending — which have hitherto formed the basis of the work of fiction. Life appeared to him to flow on, without returning upon itself, without intelligible compensations or revenges, without poetic justice, without definite punishments or rewards. So far as might humanly be perceived, the designs of Providence — if there were a Providence — were too far-reaching and too general to fall within the scope of any human representation of life. The life which fiction had been portraying was a sort of fairyland, or fools' paradise, having no actual or possible counterpart in the real world. Such tales were fit to amuse children, but not to interest mature minds. They might be pretty, or stirring, or absorbing, but they did not present the truth; and fiction, of which the warp and woof were not truth was nothing.

This being admitted, the question remained whether it were not possible to write fiction that was both true and readable? — were not the intrinsic qualities of human beings, without reference to their dramatic interaction, or to any movement of destiny in which they might be arbitrarily involved, capable of being rendered interesting? If the noblest study of mankind were man, what

need was there to force the blind current of events to assume the semblance of intelligent and sympathetic action? Let us rather study man and his life as they are, and trust to the faithfulness of the picture to attract and hold the attention of the reader.

The argument is certainly a plausible one. It does not deny the offices of art, but it changes the method and the direction in which art shall be applied; we find in James's writings a sagacious and effective selection of types, and a further judicious selection of the traits by which they shall be presented. Whatever is essential to a full understanding is given; the rest is omitted. The dialogue is carefully studied, but it is used not so much to advance the plot — for there is no plot — as to elucidate character. The accessories and environment are minutely described, when they are the result of human modification or construction; but natural scenery is briefly treated, as having no vital reference to man. More weight is given to the mental states and impulses that result in action, than to the actions themselves, it being the former only that mould or express character. When the several characters, and their mutual relations, have been adequately portrayed and accounted for, the narrative ceases. We may imagine them going through any subsequent adventures we choose: the novelist has given us data for predicting what they would do under any reasonable circumstances; and he conceives his office to be limited to that. Anybody can invent adventures: but only the artist and the student can give verisimilitude to representations of human character.

**Character study.**

Realizing the importance to his method of perfect technique, James has spared no pains to attain such perfection. His style has passed through several stages: we are not prepared to affirm that the latest is the best. But at its worst it is a fine instrument of expression, and at its best it has every beauty but the very highest. At times it is belittled by the introduction of French words and phraseology; and it is never quite free from self-consciousness. It is rich in delicate refinements, to be appreciated only by those who know the difficulties of good English composition. It is solid with the results of wide reading

**His style.**

of the best authors: not that James's writing contains definite allusions to his literary culture and reminiscences, as Lowell's does; but we surmise it from the character of his diction, and from what he forbears to say. It is a pleasure to read him, for the sake of the intellectual allurements offered on each page; but there is necessarily a deficiency of continuous interest in his volumes.

James has wit, but not humor; and sometimes he is beguiled into putting more wit into the conversations of his personages than probability would warrant; but that is a weakness easily forgiven. He sedulously refrains from favoritism in his attitude towards his characters: but in so refraining, he also gives the impression of a too coldly critical attitude, which jars upon the reader. His studies are made on a plan the opposite of that pursued by Shakespeare, and other great literary artists. He always approaches his subjects from without, instead of from within. Instead of identifying himself with them, and interpreting them by sympathy, he dissects them, or explains them by rule of thumb. Hereby he loses the coöperation of the reader, whose own imagination is not stimulated, but who stands coldly by, with no emotion warmer than that of critical curiosity. James makes every effort to do the whole work himself; but even when he succeeds, it is at the cost of power which might better have been utilized in some other way — as if a woodman were to chop upwards, against the attraction of gravitation, instead of adding the weight of the planet to his axe.

**His critical attitude.**

The value of James's theory of fiction must be judged in some measure by its results. He cannot be called an unsuccessful writer: he has won the admiration of a cultivated and thoughtful circle, and is one of the most widely known of our authors: but he has never been popular, and is not likely to become so. He has had many followers and imitators; but the best of them has not had a moiety of his merit. James, indeed, has made no pretence of founding a school of fiction, and it is quite possible that he writes as he does only because he finds that particular method the one

**Judged by results.**

best adapted to his own peculiar powers. Be that as it may, the method appears to be a barren one. It is ingenious and logical; but art is beyond logic. Men love story, because they are human beings. This is not the place to enter into a philosophical argument on the matter; but proportion and compensation are laws of the mind, and they are necessary elements in every work of art. The story may exist either on the spiritual, or on the material level; it may be a story of character, or of incident, or of the two harmonized; but a story there must be. The sculptor and the painter recognize the obligations of arrangement and balance of form and mass, of light, shade and color, and so should the poet and the novelist. Art does not seek to reproduce the universe, or fragmentary parts or phases of the universe: but epitomes in miniature thereof, organized on the principles that constitute the universal frame of things. The day dawns, brightens to noon, and darkens to dusk: the planets circle in their orbits: the seasons succeed one another, from spring to spring. Why shall there not be stories, with a beginning, a middle and an end? The measure of our craving for art is the measure of our sense of the shortcomings of life. If art were but the record of life over again, there would be no reason for its existence. James fears to cut loose from observed fact. But fact is not final; it is the mask of truth, and often a misleading one. The soul has certainties, compared with which the facts of existence are but shadows.

**William Dean Howells** (1837–). High imagination is not among Mr. Howells's literary gifts: in this respect he is inferior to James. But he has graceful fancy, playful humor, a pure and pleasing style and minute and accurate observation. There is a poetic vein in his temperament that is lacking in James, and that gives a grateful aroma to his writing. The artistic sense is not strongly developed in him; his stories are deficient in form, but are incidentally charming. His outlook on life is neither broad nor profound, but it is humane and gentle: and as a workman he is conscientious, and spares no pains to satisfy his ideal of perfection.

Howells was born in Ohio, and the first twenty years of his life were years of poverty and labor. He was a printer, a newspaper reporter and correspondent, an assistant editor, a campaign biographer. As occasion served he indulged his literary instinct by writing poetry, and by picking up what he could of Latin, Greek, Italian, French and German. Heine became one of his early poetic models. At the age of twenty-two he published, in conjunction with J. J. Piatt, "Poems of Two Friends." Two years later, Lincoln gave him the appointment of consul at Venice, which he held for the full term of four years. The fruit of this experience was two delightful books of travel, "Venetian Days" and "Italian Journeys." On his return he was for a few months employed in editorial work on "The Nation," a New York literary and political journal: but this was presently exchanged for the post of assistant editor of "The Atlantic Monthly"; and in 1871, on the retirement of James T. Fields, Howells became editor-in-chief. He was then thirty-four years old. He retained this honorable position for ten years: and on resigning it was offered a lucrative engagement on "Harper's Magazine," which he still holds.

William Dean Howells.

**Biographical.**

Natural modesty, and the want of a thorough education in his youth, combined to make Howells distrustful of his own powers, and prone to be influenced by "masters," and to be guided by theories derived from his study of them. Theories are detrimental to the best literature, which has uniformly been the spontaneous outcome of temperament and intuition. Howells set himself resolutely and systematically to learn his art. Beginning with light poetry, graceful but unimportant, he next tried his hand, with marked success, at prose

**Early experiments.**

descriptions of scenery and life. His first work in this direction is all but equal to his best. He has the painter's love of beauty and color, and the poet's felicity in reproducing them in words. His humorous perception, never mordant nor ill-natured, sweetens and brightens every page. A tender and luminous atmosphere — one of the rarest and most valuable literary qualities — softens and elevates his pictures, while his study of detail is so accurate and yet so effortless that the reader discovers a new value in eyesight. His comments upon what he sees are just and acute; and a gentle, unobtrusive personal tone permeates the composition, removing all stiffness and artificiality, and establishing the most agreeable relations of companionship. For first books, "Venetian Days" and "Italian Journeys" are remarkable achievements.

The publication in 1871 of "Suburban Sketches" was a further success on the same lines. Howells was then living in Cambridge, near Boston, and he passes in review the quiet features of his existence with a lightness and felicity of handling, and a firmness and purity of style, that are scarcely susceptible of improvement. It may be questioned, indeed, whether Howells has ever done anything else so good as this. But he was ambitious of higher achievements, and in "Their Wedding Journey" he for the first time ventured on a slender vein of fiction. It is barely fiction: it balances on the verge of fact. The bulk of the little volume is taken up with a record of travel to Niagara: but various characters are incidentally introduced, names are given to them, and bits of dialogue are written out. There is no story; and there is a certain timidity in the touch, as if the author felt he was making a perilous and rather audacious experiment. The reader, too, is inclined to think that it might have been as well to leave the fiction out. But Howells had crossed his little Rubicon, and must go on. "A Chance Acquaintance," while sufficiently faithful to real scenes to be used as a guide-book, belongs more distinctly to fiction; the characters have more to say and to do, and the story — to call it that — turns on a rather vulgar piece of snobbishness perpetrated by an aristocratic young gentleman from Boston. The book leaves an unpleasant impression, and a doubt

as to whether the author had justly estimated the character of his hero.

Meanwhile, Howells had come under the influence of the Russian novelist, Turgeneff, and his next book, "A Foregone Conclusion," shows the effect of his study. It treats of the love of an Italian priest for an American girl, and of the tragic situation consequent upon such a passion. The theme is here dramatic, and the treatment is a great advance upon the combination of guide-book and fiction that had preceded it. As a story of character and passion, Mr. Howells has never surpassed this work. He has, since then, gained in solidity of style and technical elaboration; but he has never come so near stirring the deeper sympathies of his readers. His later novels are, comparatively, artificial and conventional, and there is in them a fatal lack of distinction; they are not so much democratic as plebeian. The author retains his refinement, but his characters and incidents become vulgar and mean.

**His best book.**

This appears to be the result not so much of natural disposition as of conformity to theory. The theory in question has been provisionally entitled the theory of realism, though this name is in some respects misleading. The realist, in Howells's sense, should present life not as he thinks it ought to be, but as he thinks it is; not as he imagines it, but as he sees it. The exceptional in character and circumstance should be avoided: fiction should deal only with the average of men and events. Heroes, heroines and heroism are banished from the stage, and the loftier excursions of the soul are ignored, while its darker impulses are kept out of sight. The writer may observe as closely as his faculties allow, but he must be chary of reflections; he is to submit data, but not to draw inferences. Inasmuch as the lives of the real persons of our acquaintance are seldom symmetrically rounded, and justice is often imperfect, the mimic existence presented by the novelist must be fragmentary and inconsequent.

**His theory of realism.**

Howells does his best to illustrate his own rules. He shows us average men and women in commonplace circumstances. Since

all that can be scientifically known of persons is indicated by their words and acts, Howells shuns conjecture, or leaves it to the reader. But there is a fallacy here. Real conversation is constantly alien from real thought: and real acts are often preceded by doubts and abortive impulses that are truer keys to character than the acts themselves. In other words, appearances are deceptive; and the novelist who records appearances only, is misleading in direct proportion to his success. Moreover, the conventional man is such by reason of his avoidance of passion and eccentricity, which are the surest tests of character. Consequently, the more nearly man approaches the conventional, the more artificial is he, and the less genuine. Howells's cultivation of the conventional, therefore, leads him away from true realism, instead of towards it.

With these restrictions, Howells is competent to the tasks he sets himself. His portrayals are sympathetic, humorous and faithful. But one feels that if he had followed his natural impulses in literature, instead of allowing himself to be swayed and perplexed by the example of writers in every sense so foreign to him as Turguenef, Tolstoi, Dostoiefsky and others, whose imperfections he mistakes for principles, and whose merits he cannot reproduce, he would have gained a reputation far higher and sounder than can be hoped for now. He is especially weak and fallible in literary judgment, but, as is often the case, where he is weakest he believes himself to be most strong. It is his misfortune to have been placed in a position where, as literary censor, his frailties run riot, and he is encouraged to confirm himself in errors which might otherwise be unnoticed or condoned.

**His literary judgment.**

Since the publication of "A Foregone Conclusion," his principal works have been "The Lady of the Aroostook," "The Undiscovered Country," treating of spiritualism, the weakest of his productions; "A Modern Instance," "The Rise of Silas Lapham," and "Indian Summer," a charming little story, the scene of which is laid in Italy. Besides these novels, he has written a number of light and witty parlor comedies — "The Register," "The Eleva-

tor," "The Mousetrap," *et cetera;* and a couple of volumes of travel and study, "Tuscan Cities" and "Modern Italian Poets." One feels inclined to say that Howells's literary faults are acquired, while his virtues are innate: and, would he but bestow his exquisite workmanship upon some fitting theme, his place in American literature would be not far from the top.

**Walt Whitman** (1819–1892). Externally, if not in the deeper sense, Whitman belongs among the innovators; but it is a question whether, when the shock of his grotesque style and still more grotesque "claims" is over, he may not turn out to be a comparatively commonplace and imitative writer. Much of his apparent originality is certainly due to his remarkable ignorance; he knows almost nothing of the thought and history of mankind; and the coarse, primitive quality of his intellect renders him incapable of receiving cultivation. His egotism is at least commensurate with his ignorance; and the world, startled by the magnitude of his pretensions, and perplexed by the turgid and uncouth truculence of his diction, accepted him, for a time — and pending further inquiry — at his own valuation. Not a few poets and scholars, especially in England, assumed his peculiarities to be due, not to dearth of education, but to conscious and voluntary conviction: they credited him with first knowing as much about literature and life as they did, and then heroically abjuring it all in obedience to a new light and inspiration. It is so unusual to find a man of Whitman's rough texture practising literature, that one's first impulse is to interpret his clumsiness as a new form of genius.

Walt Whitman.

The matter is, however, complicated by the fact that Whitman

really does possess certain strong and hearty qualities, and a fund of confidence in himself which in some degree answers for genius, since it prompts him to unrestrained and exhaustive expression. When a man acquires the habit of uttering everything that comes into his head, his head must indeed be empty if it does not occasionally furnish him with a good thing. Whitman's nature, physical and gross though it is, is a harmonious one; he has warm feelings and large sympathies; and he is at times moved by a lyrical impulse that indicates the germs of poetic susceptibility. But his claim to credit for inventing a new poetic style, and establishing original principles in art, will not bear serious examination. Previous to the publication of "Leaves of Grass" in 1855, Whitman had attempted to write according to the ordinary rules, and had failed to attract notice, the reason being that he was incompetent, owing to deficiency of mental equipment, to yield intelligent obedience to the laws of composition, prose or metrical. Another man would thereupon have turned his attention to something else: but Whitman's rude vitality and self-esteem would not permit him to accept defeat; so, since he could not use the instruments that had sufficed for Homer, Shakespeare and Tennyson, he bethought himself to decry these as effete and inadequate, and to bray forth his message upon a fog-horn. But even the fog-horn was not original; it was the best imitation that Whitman could devise of that sublime organ that utters its majestic music in the Lamentations of Jeremiah and the prophecies and rhapsodies of Isaiah. So destitute was Whitman of the musical ear that he could not distinguish between the lofty harmonies of the Old Testament, and that mixture of the double-shuffle and the limp, the stride and the break-down, that he offers to us as the poetry of the future.

**First work.**

William Blake, the English artist, mystic and poet of the last century, had also gone to the Scriptures for his inspiration; but he brought back gold and jewels, where Whitman could find only slag and tinsel. In proclaiming a revolt against the errors and prejudices of the past, he succeeded only in revolting against common sense, good taste and literary sanity.

**His revolt.**

Instead of resonance, eloquence and the irregular but sublime rhythm of nature — of the cataract, the sea, the wind in the boughs of the primeval forest — he gives us the slang of the street, the *patois* and pigeon-English of the frontier and the bald vulgarity of the newspaper penny-a-liner. In short, there is not one word to be said in defence of the medium through which Whitman declares himself.

But good wares are sometimes found in vile wrappings; let us see what manner of wares Whitman brings. He declares himself to be the spokesman and representative of the unrestricted Democracy: he is the brother of all men, the child of Nature, and the epitome of her qualities. He is everything, good and bad: for all men are one, nature is man inchoate; right and wrong, morality and immorality, are but points of view, and modification of circumstances. Is there anything original in this attitude? Surely not. It is at least as old as Brahminism and Buddhism: but one need go no further than to Emerson to find it all tersely and exquisitely stated in his poems, "Mithridates," "Guy" and "Brahma." The only novel feature in Whitman's case is, that he does not announce his philosophy abstractly, but thrusts himself forward by name, — "I — Walt Whitman"; "I celebrate myself, and sing myself." In other words, he abandons all personal dignity and reserve, and sprawls incontinently before us in his own proper person. It is no wonder that an expedient so desperate should attract attention: so do the gambols of a bull in a china-shop. In old times, a sort of sanctity and reverence was associated with idiots, insane persons and the victims of hysteria and epilepsy. The nature of their affliction was not understood, and it was supposed that behavior so strange and abnormal as theirs must betoken some divine or superhuman agency. Analogous to this is the attitude of many of Whitman's admirers and disciples to-day. They cannot persuade themselves that a man who acts so grotesquely should be anything less than inspired. If he cut his hair, dressed respectably, spoke in hexameters and in good grammar, they would not bestow a second thought upon him, though the "message" that he delivered were precisely the

**The self he sung.**

same that it is now. It is not the minds of his audience that Whitman affects, but their eyes, ears and olfactories. It is the "barbaric yawp," not the philosophy of human brotherhood, that enchants them. They like him for his unlikeness to themselves — for the contrast of his frank grossness with their fastidiousness. On the other hand, people of Whitman's own social station and quality neither know nor care anything about him. He is the least popular, in the broad sense, of American writers. He is the fad — the pet — of the aristocracy of culture; and when they have tired of him, he will be in danger of slipping out of sight altogether.

We have maintained that Whitman's method is false, and that his philosophy comes some thousands of years too late to be called original: it remains to say that, be his philosophy new or old, his own writings (poems, chants, yawps, or whatever they be termed) are inconsistent with it. He is not a democrat: he is not broad: he is not free from prejudice. On the contrary, like most ignorant men, he is narrow, bigoted and provincial. Like politicians in a canvass, his principles profess one thing, while his speeches express another. Whitman intimates that his egotism is only in appearance: that in reality he speaks impersonally: "what I assume, you shall assume, for every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you." But, in truth, his egotism is the most real thing about him; he portrays his own character and qualities, and no one else's: he celebrates not mankind, but Walt Whitman. Again, he proclaims democracy and universality; but he really cares for and sympathizes with only a very limited class of persons, and that, one of the least representative of classes. He purports to be un-self-conscious and natural; but his self-consciousness and artificiality are painfully apparent in almost every line. He announces his independence of all forms; yet he arbitrarily adheres to a form that is more laborious and cramping than the most elaborate verse. He boasts that, to him, nothing is unclean; yet he extols many things solely because of their uncleanness. The final effort of his writings is not to strengthen our belief in the majestic unity of

**Not a representative of democracy.**

Creation, but to burden us with the barren tedium of a straitened, vulgar and self-conceited individuality.

Nevertheless, as we have intimated, Whitman's product is not wholly without tolerable features. He is a human being; he is an awkward, friendly, naïve creature; his craving for approbation is pathetic; he possesses a slow, primitive sort of imagination; and, once in a while, when his feelings are strongly affected (as on the occasion of the assassination of Lincoln) the very clumsiness and inertia of his mind operates to give a lyrical quality to his utterance. This poem, — "O Captain! My Captain!" is a genuine and moving poem: but it runs counter to every principle that Whitman has laid down as binding upon the poet. The lines are rhymed and regular, the theme is purely personal, the language is direct and simple and even the grammar is comparatively orthodox. Its figures are imaginative, and its sentiment fervent, sincere and single. It gains much by contrast with the rest of Whitman's writings; but it shows how much that would be worthy of attention and commendation he might have done, could he but have forgotten himself and his philosophy, and expressed in unaffected phraseology the kindly and spontaneous impulses of his heart and nature. It is only the emotional side of Whitman that could ever possess any value for literature: his thoughts are worthless. Searching through the repulsive wilderness of his pages, we not seldom stumble upon something that might have been worth preserving, had it not been distorted and degraded by perverse treatment. So we see little children in the slums of a city, in whose faces we discern germs of somewhat divine, though the squalid and ignorant conditions of their lives bar them out from all hope of use and beauty.

**His best poem in conventional form.**

The "Leaves of Grass," with its various additions and emendations, represents Whitman's life-work. His war-record as a hospital nurse is embodied in "Drum-Taps"; two prose works are entitled "Specimen Days and Collect" and "November Boughs." The details of his life are unimportant. He was born in West Hills, Long Island, attended school in Brooklyn, worked at printing and at carpentering, and served as a volunteer army-nurse

during the war. In his later years he lived at Camden, New Jersey, supported by the sale of his books, and by the contributions of his friends.

**Frank Richard Stockton** (1834–). The literary domain of Stockton is almost as small as it is agreeable: but he is sole monarch of it. No one has even attempted to rival him on his own ground. He is a humorist, and he is thoroughly American; but to describe him as an "American humorist" would be misleading.

**An original humorist.**

The quality of his fun is of his own individual invention. It is the natural product of his personal temperament. It is never boisterous, nor irreverent, nor does it deal in exaggerations. It depends for much of its effect upon fine literary taste and handling. It quietly conducts the reader into a new world, and calmly introduces him to things which would be marvels anywhere else, but which are there commonplaces of every-day occurrence.

Stockton was born in Philadelphia. He was educated in the high school, and supplemented the instruction he got there with the reading of novels and story-books, and by writing poems and stories of his own. At his father's request, he learned the trade of wood-engraving; but the chief practical use to which he put his accomplishment was to illustrate the tales and verses that he contributed to periodicals. His brother was editor of a newspaper, and Frank acted for a while as special correspondent, and afterwards as associate editor. Later, he was connected with "Hearth and Home," and with "Scribner's Monthly" (the fore-

**History.**

runner of "The Century"), to which he contributed the first serial that brought him into notice, — "Rudder Grange." During several years he was assistant-editor of "St. Nicholas." At length a short tale appeared over his signature, with the title of "The Lady? or the Tiger?" It had a wide and instantaneous success, and has ever since been connected with Stockton's name, as is "The Heathen Chinee" with Bret Harte's. Since then, Stockton has written two or three long novels, and many short stories; but it is upon the short stories of "The Lady? or the Tiger?" type that his reputation rests.

One of the most characteristic of these short tales is called "Negative Gravity." We are introduced to an elderly gentleman and his wife taking a walk of fifteen miles, out and back, over rough ground, encumbered with a knapsack and a lunch-basket. This athletic feat they accomplish in the course of a few hours without the slightest effort. The reason is that the gentleman has invented a little machine, easily contained in his knapsack, which counteracts the attraction of gravitation; and by screwing it up the weight of the person who carries it can be diminished to any required figure, or made less than nothing at all. We are not told how the machine is constructed: its construction is an accomplished fact before the story begins, and all we are required to do is to assist at the surprising, but perfectly logical and inevitable results that its use and misuse bring about.

**"Negative gravity."**

"The Adscititious Experiences of Mr. Amos Kilbright" is another captivatingly bewildering narrative. Mr. Kilbright, it appears, was drowned about a century ago; but his great-grandson happened the other day to attend a spiritualistic materializing seance, and requested to see the spirit of his legendary great-grandfather. The spirit of Amos appeared accordingly, and was materialized; but by an oversight he was allowed to remain so long in that condition, that when the managers of the seance tried to dematerialize him, they found it impossible to do so. The perils, perplexities and entanglements of Mr. Kilbright's second earthly career are then seriously and sympathetically expounded and analyzed by the author, and are brought to a perfectly satisfactory issue.

**The medium outdone.**

It is said that only an exceptionally sane mind can comprehend the vagaries of insanity. If that be the case, Stockton must be one of the sanest of American writers; to read him is to see dissolving around you the foundations and moorings of the actual world, and to find yourself in a world of fantasy, where impossibilities present themselves with unimpeachable correctness as admitted and inevitable facts. There is a cool, rational method perceptible all through the crazy evolutions of the author's prog-

ress: and there are touches of poetic beauty, gleams of human mirth, breaths of true sentiment. The argument moves on blamelessly from point to point, and we remember only by an effort that, like a fly on the ceiling, it is upside down, in defiance of natural law. Real genius is shown in the construction of these little stories; in the reticence, the simplicity and the neatness of the workmanship. Stockton has no axe to grind, and no moral to enforce; his object is simply the reader's pleasure, and he generally brings it about.

**Logical perversity.**

Among other short stories of his inditing are "The Remarkable Wreck of the Thomas Hyke," "The Transferred Ghost," "A Borrowed Month," "The Bee-Man of Orn." He has written some excellent novelettes, such as "The Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine," and "The Great War Syndicate." His long novels are serious pieces of work, and have little to distinguish them from the average contemporary novel of the better class. "The Late Mrs. Null," and "The Hundredth Man," are the titles of the best two of them. But there is little or nothing in them that would entitle the author to a place among the innovators.

## XI.

## WRITERS OF TO-DAY.

We have now to consider the men and women whose writings constitute the substance of our current literature.

Most of these writers are still in the midst of their productiveness; and it would be unjust to pass any final verdict upon their work. Any one of them may yet write a book, a story or a poem which would modify the critic's judgment. The course that seems most expedient, therefore, is to classify them, so far as possible, according to the nature of their product, and to treat of each as briefly as may be consistent with explicitness. The great majority must, of course, be passed without mention: a mere list of contemporary American authors would fill a volume. Nor is it desirable that the student should attempt to acquaint himself with the mass of books now publishing. Time, and the winnowing of criticism, will in due season cause the valuable residue to emerge, and it can then receive the attention that it merits. Meanwhile, there is more than enough material already tested and approved to occupy the most insatiable mind.

The extent to which authorship is now followed as a profession is remarkable, especially in view of the obstacles with which, by general admission, it has to contend. The absence until this year (1891) of an international copyright law, subjected the native writer to the competition of foreign authors, whose books, being appropriated by American publishers without compensation, were published at prices almost nominal, thereby shutting the higher-priced American books out of their own market. But for one circumstance, this foreign competition must have resulted in the total extinction of American authorship — except in the case of those writers whose independent

**The situation in America.**

means should enable them to publish their works at their own expense, and without hope of pecuniary returns.

The circumstance referred to is the extraordinary multiplication of periodicals. Daily, weekly and bi-weekly papers, and monthly magazines and reviews, have increased to such an extent within the last fifteen or twenty years, that probably every American able to read is acquainted with at least one of them. It is in these periodicals that the productions of our writers make their first appearance. They are paid for at various rates — dependent upon the circulation and price of the periodical, and the reputation of the author — and it is upon these payments, and not upon the royalties from the sale of their books in book-form, that the authors depend for their living. A first-class novelist, for example, will receive from three to ten thousand dollars for the serial use of a novel in such a magazine as "The Century" or "Harper's," or in one or other of the great "newspaper syndicates" that have lately been established. This pays him for his work: the two or three hundred dollars that he may derive from royalties, at ten or fifteen per cent, on the book as afterward published at a dollar or more a copy, is regarded as extra money, and does not enter into his calculations. Inferior writers receive, of course, but a tithe of the sums above named; but by rapid production, and by publication in two or more periodicals at the same time (perhaps under several pseudonyms) they contrive to exist. Meanwhile, the size of the reading public, and the habit of reading, constantly increase.

Even these facts, however, fail to entirely account for the vast amount of books and articles that daily issue from the press. A large proportion of these must be entirely unremunerative; and many others are brought forth at the author's expense. A mania for writing at all hazards seems to have taken possession of the community; and when we consider that, according to trustworthy statistics, ten books are written for every one that is printed, it would seem as if comparatively few of our countrymen could be unconnected with authorship in some form.

On the other hand, the increase in the number of really valuable

books is probably very small: it would be a conservative estimate to say that one out of ten thousand will be heard of ten years hence, or that one in a million will survive a century. We may expect, therefore, that the fashion of universal authorship will presently cease. That for which there is no demand will not long continue to be supplied. The few really gifted authors will remain; and then we may hope to witness the rise of a literature which shall be commensurate in quality with the greatness of the land that gives it birth.

## I. The Imaginative Group.

The value of a literature is tested by the quality of its imaginative works. All works other than those of the imagination are of transitory interest, and, save as records, unimportant and uninstructive to any except the special and temporary demand that calls them forth. Imagination, however, enters as an element into many writings that are not technically or exclusively imaginative: as, for example, Bacon's Essays and Gibbon's Histories. Again, many books may be classed under the general title of imaginative, that have little or no imagination in them, — as Tupper's "Proverbial Philosophy" and the novels of the Warner sisters. The present heading is designed to cover those works in American literature which are imaginative *par excellence*, both in name and quality, — that are, in other words nothing if not imaginative.

**The test of a literature.**

**Richard Henry Stoddard** (1825–). No living American man of letters stands higher than Mr. Stoddard, or has devoted himself to letters more assiduously than he. The descendant of a New England sea-faring race, he was born in Massachusetts, in the house where his forefathers had lived. At ten years of age he came to New York, where he has resided ever since. He was educated at the public school, and has always been a poor man. In his youth, he worked in an iron-foundry. In 1853 he received an appointment in the New York Custom House, which he held

till 1870, when he accepted a position in the Dock Department under McClellan. Later, he filled the post of librarian in the public library. He is now, and has been for several years, literary reviewer for "The Mail and Express," a New York evening newspaper.

From his boyhood he has been a poet. In 1880 a collected edition of his poems was published by the Scribners, in a handsome volume of five hundred pages. Since then he has written other poems, many of them fully equal to his earlier ones. He recently published a small volume of verse under the title of "The Lion's Cub." His prose writings include literary criticism and biographies.

The characteristic of his poetry is high and lovely imagination. It is simple and severe in form, spontaneous in feeling: the poet never seeks for recondite subjects, but treats what he finds with such tenderness and depth of vision that common and familiar things are found to be beautiful and wonderful. The unadorned language that seems so artless is the result of resolute and sleepless self-discipline, suppressing and pruning the froth of passion and the frippery of sentiment, and welding and annealing the pure residue into the fabric of enduring art. In Stoddard the critic and the creator are united. Probably no living man rivals him in knowledge of ancient and modern poetry; and this knowledge does not lie inert in his memory, but is incorporate in his thought, rendering his naturally sound and wholesome taste next to infallible in questions of literary judgment. He has applied this taste to his own verse, leaving little for other critics of it to do. If anything, he has been too remorseless; sometimes nothing but the naked conception seems to be left. Yet in his severity he never forgets beauty: he both remembers it and understands it, as his "Hymn to the Beautiful" sufficiently testifies. He finds it everywhere, and his words are transfigured with its spirit.

**Qualities of his poetry.**

No poet has written of nature more delightfully or from more loving observation than Stoddard. His pictures of it are more than accurate: they are bathed in a fairy atmosphere; they inter-

pret the soul beneath the substance. Keats was one of his early masters, and his lines sometimes recall the English poet's sensuousness and color: but Stoddard's nature is more complex than Keats's, and he traverses regions that the latter never knew. He has had profound experience of the sadness as well as of the joy of life: of loss as well as of love. He has gazed at the great mysteries, and, if he has found them dark, he has made that darkness seem pregnant and sublime to those who follow him. He has felt and uttered homely pathos as only great writers have done. He has felt the tragedy of sin, and has spoken of it with manly and reverent charity: he has known the baseness of wrong, and it has drawn from him words of scorn and irony. In other moods, he sings songs that have the wild and careless music of a bird's song, yet always with the human note that brings it back to art. He has written gallant ballads of fiery romance and sweeping action, and he has indited noble poems in blank verse — the test of poets, which he sustains with honor. There is no recognized form of verse in which he is not accomplished, nor has any poet shown a wider range of sympathies than he. Some men who have written true poetry had to wait for the inspiration of a crisis of the soul; but Stoddard finds poetry in all things. The daily breath of life that he inhales comes forth from him again in harmony. He is a poet to the marrow. He is never strange, remote nor fantastical, but a plain man among men, speaking in a tongue that all can understand, though it is touched with a fineness and a fire, a sweetness and a grace, that are the gift of poets only.

**Poems of Nature.**

**Edmund Clarence Stedman** (1833–). There is literature in Stedman's blood: his ancestors were cultivated people. He was born in Hartford, Connecticut, and attended Yale College. In his junior year he was suspended for overmuch vivacity: he took hold of life at once, and by the time he was one and twenty he was married, and the editor of a newspaper. The next ten years were devoted to journalism, and he lived a bohemian life. In 1861 he acted as war-correspondent of "The

**His history.**

Tribune." He had already published a small volume of poems. After the close of the war, he took the step, noteworthy for a literary man, of entering Wall Street as a banker and broker, with the avowed object of making money enough to enable him to write at his ease. He worked for ten years both as a business man and a poet, and was successful in both respects. He bought a handsome house in the upper part of the city, and it became a literary centre. In 1883 he lost the better part of his wealth, but did not yield to misfortune. He set to work once more, and recovered his losses; finding opportunity, meanwhile, to publish two works of criticism, on "The Victorian Poets" and on "Poets of America." Among his own poetical productions are "The Diamond Wedding," "Bohemia," "Old John Brown," "Pan in Wall Street," "The Heart of New England," "Gettysburg," "Laura, My Darling" and "Hawthorne."

Edmund Clarence Stedman.

Stedman has a vivid, energetic and social nature. He has quick and ardent sympathies, is alive at all points, is a man of the world, and withal an optimist. He is sagacious and cordial, always ready to help, encourage and advise the younger generation of literary men. He also delights in the acquaintance of men in lines of life totally distinct from his own. He is opinionated, confident and voluble, but his conversation is witty, solid and instructive. He is tireless and conscientious in labor, and his cheerfulness is constant and contagious. His mind is broad and hospitable, his critical taste fastidious, but generous. His scholarship is exceptional, and his knowledge of literature wide and accurate.

Whatever there is in Stedman leaps forth, and is at his fingers' tips. He has the impulse to express all that he feels or knows.

His literary ability is conspicuous, and he takes the same pleasure in it that his readers do. His poetry is at once easy and polished; his prose is lucid and elegant. The fibre of his work is fine and strong, nor is it lacking in color and picturesqueness. It is eminently sane, bright and sensible; it is expressive rather than profound, and ardent rather than passionate. It does not tamper with mysteries and enigmas; its fulness leaves little to the imagination, and it is more graceful and cultivated than imaginative. The poet is too intellectual ever to quite forget himself; he can be almost everything but un-self-conscious. But a charming vein of manly good-fellowship runs through his verse; it has almost the freedom and directness of talk, yet it is constructed with the most precise attention to art, form and beauty. Stedman never writes a careless or slovenly line, though he may occasionally write prose in metrical form.

**A versatile author.**

He has written nothing that is not agreeable reading — rich, witty, light, strong, various. Some of his pieces stir the pulse like spiritual music; some, like "John Brown," have a vigorous, homely strength; some, like the "Diamond Wedding," show fine powers of satire combined with thoughtfulness. The poem of "Hawthorne" is noble and eloquent, and reaches an exalted level of criticism. Stedman has a lofty ideal of poetry: he recognizes the best, and can describe it, and all but write it. Some of his idyls are models of sincerity and picturesqueness: he is impressionable, and can convey his impressions. In such a poem as "The Heart of New England," on the other hand, he is austere, elevated and forcible. He is versatile without being shallow, and rapid but not heedless.

His two volumes of prose criticism are valuable for their information, broad scope and catholic judgment. In conjunction with Miss Hutchinson, he has just completed, in ten large volumes, a comprehensive survey of American literature, embodying extracts from the works of the majority of known American authors, from the earliest to the latest. It is a most useful compilation for the student, and for reference. He is still in the prime of his powers and of his activity.

**Thomas Bailey Aldrich** (1837–) was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. His father had business in New Orleans, and the boy occasionally visited him there. After an ordinary school education, tempered by desultory reading, and many boyish pranks, he began his working life as a book-keeper. But such a career was distasteful to him, and he abandoned it for journalism and other literary labors. After the publication of several volumes of prose and poetry, he succeeded Howells, in 1880, as editor of "The Atlantic Monthly," and held that position for more than ten years.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

Aldrich is first of all a wit. Both in conversation and in writing he is inveterately brilliant. He is fond of refined practical jokes, and has achieved the unique feat of perpetrating several excellent ones in his stories. "Marjorie Daw" is the best known of these "sells"; it is managed with consummate and remorseless art. All of Aldrich's stories and novels are clever, and an unsuspected trap lurks in almost all of them. They are masterly little structures, charming to read, but without much to anchor them in the memory. The most widely popular of his books is probably his "Story of a Bad Boy," which is autobiographical, and contains a great deal of fun, and not a little admirable description. His notes of travel are also graphic and amusing.

**His literary jokes.**

Delicate and nimble fancy is the characteristic of his poetry. It is exquisitely polished, pointed and finished: it is fine and graceful as the arrows and arabesques of frost on a window-pane. There is often an excellent felicity of expression, and a subtlety in the thing expressed, that give acute pleasure to the reader. But Aldrich is a thoroughly

**A delicate poet.**

artificial poet; his aim is to produce an effect; if, incidentally, he utters truth or wisdom, so much the better. He never opens his heart or his life; none of his poems are sincere self-revelations. There is nothing vital in them. Aldrich is observant, literary and ingenious; he plays tricks with his intellect; he uses words and ideas as a woman uses silks in embroidery. Many of his best poems are short, embodying an apothegm, a paradox or an epigram. His sentiment recalls the compliments of an eighteenth-century exquisite: his pathos and emotion are masterly imitations, filed and fashioned with the nicest assiduity, as in the "Baby Bell." His narrative poems are not interesting. At his best, he surpasses his favorite Herrick in daintiness and finish; but he lacks Herrick's naïve feeling and power of putting his true self into his work. But after all is said, he is a finished literary workman, and has given the public nothing that was not as nearly perfect as his best pains could make it.

**Coates Kinney** (1826–). It was in 1849 that Kinney published a poem — "The Rain upon the Roof" — that became a favorite all over the country. He forbore to follow up his success, and persisted in his forbearance until 1887, when his "Lyrics of the Ideal and the Real" were printed. They contain poems, mostly short, on a variety of subjects. But the opening poem, "Pessim and Optim," is a long one, and a striking production. It is both philosophic and imaginative, original and profound. It is a stronger conception than Tennyson's well-known "Two Voices," but less smooth in execution: it reveals a mind of a high and rare type. Kinney is direct and often rugged in expression, but his virility, earnestness and scope are entirely exceptional. Of all the poems written about children, few come so straight from the heart, or go to it more surely, than the four verses called "Threnody," on the death of a little boy. "The Haunting Voice," written in 1856, is but a brief lyric, but it portrays in unforgetable words one whole dark phase of human experience. "Consummation" contains several passages of sublime imagery. In "The Shepherd of the Advent," in

unrhymed stanzas, a splendid picture is powerfully drawn. Kinney has been the least voluble of our poets, but he has shown qualities that might entitle him to rank with the best of them.

**Sydney Lanier** (1842–1881) was born at Macon, Georgia. He was a college graduate, a soldier in the Confederate army, a lawyer, an invalid, a musician and a poet. He travelled to Texas and elsewhere in quest of health, and much of his work was done on a sick-bed. For a time he supported himself by playing the flute at concerts in Baltimore: he was accounted one of the best living performers on that instrument: he also delivered lectures at Johns Hopkins University and at the Peabody Institute. In addition to his poems (which were not collected in a volume until after his death) he wrote a novel, "Tiger Lilies," and several books for boys. He was a man of genius, and lived a life of heroic struggle against poverty and death. He was deeply loved by those who knew him.

Sydney Lanier.

One of Lanier's most original works was a treatise on "The Science of English Verse," which portrays his conception of the nature of poetry, and of the method of producing it. It is a lucid and exhaustive study. His theory rests upon the assumption that, in poetry, the appeal is in all cases to the ear. The fundamental principles of music and of verse are discussed, and their relation pointed out. Many of his own poems illustrate his thesis, and "The Song of the Chattahoochee" marries sound to sense somewhat after the manner of Tennyson's "Brook." Lanier had an affluent imagination, and abundant art: indeed, his sensitiveness to artistic rules sometimes gave a too conscious air to his productions. He was enthusi-

**A great artist.**

astic, passionate and ambitious; but his life was too short for the mature development of his genius. Among his best poems are "The Stirrup-Cup," "From this Hundred-Terraced Height" (a cantata sung at the Centennial), "The Marshes of Glynn," "Corn," "Sunrise" and "The Symphony."

**Fitz-James O'Brien** (1828–1862) was born in County Limerick, Ireland; was educated at Dublin University, and at twenty-one years of age went to London with his inheritance of forty thousand dollars, and spent it all in two years. In 1852 he sailed for New York, and the next and last ten years of his life were spent in America. He was shot in a skirmish on the 26th of February, and died five weeks later, at the age of thirty-four.

O'Brien was personally interesting and fascinating to a high degree. He had the passionate, wayward, variable Celtic temperament. He was, by turns, reckless and tractable, fierce and gentle, defiant and affectionate. He had exquisite poetic sensibility, a mind rich with scholarship and with experience of life, and a towering imagination. His intellectual energy was surprising; some of his best work was done at a sitting. His habits were irregular, thriftless and extravagant. He was proud and independent, and would never accept aid in extremity; but he was generous without limit. His moods were changeable, from wild gaiety to saturnine gloom. His literary genius was extraordinary.

**An Irish genius.**

O'Brien wrote much, though in a fitful manner: when he had made money enough to meet his present needs, he would write no more until it was spent. None of his productions are long; poems, sketches, dramatic criticisms and stories were poured forth promiscuously, and were printed in "Harper's Magazine" and "Weekly," in "The Atlantic Monthly," in "Putnam's," and in various newspapers. In some respects he resembled Poe, who also had Irish blood in his veins: some of his stories are like Poe's in conception and style; but the workmanship is not so sustained in excellence, while, on the other hand, they are more highly colored and emotional, and convey a stronger impression of the

personal element. He was most prolific during the three years from 1855 to 1857 inclusive. Several of his tales were not published until after his death. A collection of some of his best stories was brought forth in 1885 by the Scribners, with a preface by William Winter. It was called "The Diamond Lens, and Other Stories."

"The Diamond Lens" first appeared in "The Atlantic" in 1858. It is a tale of unrestrained imagination, and of absorbing interest. A microscopist, under the guidance of a deceased man of science, with whom he communicates through a spirit medium, constructs a lens out of a large diamond, which he obtains by murdering its owner. Having focused the lens upon a drop of water, he discerns, in an infinitesimal globule (which has the appearance of a vast, fairy-like region) an exquisitely beautiful living female figure. He falls passionately in love with her; but the manifest impossibility of holding any communication with her drives him to frenzy; and at the crisis of events, the drop of water evaporates, and he sees the lovely maiden expire before his eyes.

"The Wondersmith," published in "The Atlantic" the following year, tells how an evil-disposed gypsy succeeds in animating with diabolic souls the wooden bodies of innumerable little toy manikins that he has manufactured, with intent to sell them during the winter holidays, and cause the death of all the Christian children who receive them as presents. In "What Was It?" we are introduced to a unique conception of horror. A monster, invisible to the eye, but palpable to the touch, attacks a man in his chamber, and they engage in a deadly struggle. The story is told in detail, with immense spirit and verisimilitude. The author makes the artistic mistake of having a cast made of the terrible creature, so that its form is finally revealed in all its hideousness; but no actual hideousness could rival the imaginative horror that would have remained in the reader's mind had the invisibility been maintained.

"The Lost Room" is a conception of wild mystery; and "My Wife's Tempter" is a fiercely dramatic tale of Mormon intrigue. Among his poems are "The Zouaves," "A Falling Star," written in a night; "The Sewing Bird," produced in two sittings; and "The Lost Steamship."

**John Boyle O'Reilly** (1844–1891) was, like O'Brien, an Irishman by birth, and like him came to this country when a young man. He held a commission in the English army; but becoming involved in political intrigues, he was tried and sentenced to transportation. The story of his early adventures is stirring: he finally escaped and succeeded in getting on board an American vessel. O'Reilly was a poet; he was passionately devoted to the political emancipation of his native country, but was not the less staunch and hearty in his allegiance to the country of his adoption. He was, at the time of his early death, and for many years previous, editor of the "Boston Pilot." He published a narrative of some of his adventures, and several volumes of poems, of which that entitled "In Bohemia" is perhaps the best known. His poetry is warm, vigorous, and straightforward, and often contains deep thoughts nobly uttered. But those who knew him personally found more in his conversation than he ever succeeded in expressing with the pen. His character was simple, cordial and magnanimous, and few men among our contemporary writers have been the object of more ardent personal affection than he. An adequate biography of O'Reilly has not yet been written.

**Richard Watson Gilder** (1843–) is a poet. His aim is spiritual: he is a mystic of the Dante school. He writes of love, but in a symbol: his theme is the soul. He is never quite sublime, seldom entirely masculine; but he is subtle, eloquent, felicitous and artistic. He has had a glimpse of the mystic secret, — the unity of the Universe, — and he expresses his vision in delicate music. The finish of his verse is almost excessive: a touch of rude strength would be a relief; yet purity, melody and elevation are worth much. His best things will always be *caviare* to the general. He has published "The Celestial Passion," "The New Day" and "Lyrics," besides other poems. Gilder has been for ten years the editor of "The Century Magazine."

**A mystic poet.**

**Julian Hawthorne** (1846–) was born in Boston, but accom-

panied his father to England in 1853; and though his school and college days were passed in this country, he has lived, first and last, seventeen years abroad. He began independent life as a civil engineer, in the New York Dock Department; but on being "rotated" out of office in 1872, he took up literature as a profession.

Julian Hawthorne has been a copious writer, but the bulk of his production is in magazines and newspapers. He is at his best in the imaginative vein; and such stories as "Bressant," "Idolatry," "Archibald Malmaison," "The Pearl-Shell Necklace" and "Sinfire," indicate powers in the writer which, if conscientiously and carefully employed, might produce good results. Hawthorne's longer novels are "Garth," "Sebastian Strome," "Fortune's Fool" and "Dust." One of his most useful works is a biography, in two volumes, of "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife." A book of German sketches, entitled "Saxon Studies," was the fruit of a four years' residence in Dresden.

**Harriet Prescott Spofford** (1835–) was born in Maine. Her early writings were of great imaginative promise, which has not been sustained by her later work. "The Amber Gods" overflows with romantic ideas and gorgeous imagery — the work of a poet of Oriental temperament writing in melodious and passionate prose. Her style in these earlier stories was full of rich suggestiveness, so that the reader seemed to apprehend more than met the eye. Later in life, Mrs. Spofford fell to writing short love stories; they were commendably executed, but lacked distinction. She has never repeated the irregular charm of "Sir Rohan's Ghost," "Azarian" and the other volume above mentioned. The conventional requirements of "family periodicals" have stifled her genius.

**Emma Lazarus** (1849–1887) was a woman of the Hebrew faith, of great sweetness and depth of character, and of lofty imaginative genius. She made it her theme and mission to appeal through the medium of verse to the highest instincts of

her race, to recall to them their sublime history, and to foreshadow a glorious future. The bulk of her writings was not great; but before she died she was recognized as a poet of the first rank. It is a loss to our literature that such a Daughter in Israel as Emma Lazarus should have departed so early.

**Lafcadio Hearn** (1850–) is of recent date as a writer, but his "Stray Leaves from Strange Literature," his "Chinese Ghosts," his stories and his sketches of travel indicate an ardently imaginative temperament, which may yet produce work of a high class. He was born in one of the Ionian Isles, his father being an Ionian and his mother a Greek: his home has for many years been in the South. **Celia Thaxter** (1836–), **Edith Thomas** (1857–), **Alice Cary** (1820–1871) and **Phœbe Cary** (1824–1871) have written graceful and picturesque verse.

### *Analytic Novelists.*

As the bulk of literature and the number of authors increase, the tendency to follow special lines becomes more marked. In a country so large as this, and characterized by so many different interests and modes of existence, novelists, as well as other writers, will be found devoting themselves more and more to particular aspects and veins of life. At present, we often see one writer active in more than one direction; but, as competition develops, this may be expected to become rare. In this classification we shall place authors on the basis of their more notable and characteristic works. The analytic novelists take their cue from James and Howells. They go behind action, and endeavor to explain its motive — thus taking their stand at once in the mental and in the material sphere. Their method is the opposite of that of Walter Scott, Dickens and Thackeray. It is open to the abuse of rendering the narrative too turgid and uneventful, and of entering too deeply into metaphysical sophistries. Discreetly employed, however, it gives substance to the story, and broadens our conception of the characters.

**Edgar Fawcett** (1847–) was born in New York, and has a familiarity with the phases of life in that city which recalls Balzac's knowledge of Paris. He is experienced in all kinds of literary work, from literary criticism to play-writing; he is diligent, and bestows pains on all he does. No American writer has improved more steadily than he. He has been an especial student of style, and in his earlier productions he reflected the methods of composition of several different authors. The possession of a strong poetic gift assisted him in refining his language, and he can now use this instrument as skilfully as any writer before the public. In his point of view as a novelist, he has been to a great extent influenced by the example of Henry James; but he differs from James in that his plots are uniformly strongly dramatic, and put together with a deftness and point that remind one of the modern French novel. His portrayal of character is distinct and vivid. Fawcett has always been sensitive to impressions: and this sensitiveness, which, while he was new to his calling, and had not acquired the art of curbing his utterance, was the source of most of his faults, has since become the cause of his best effects. Ten or fifteen years ago, the emotion in his stories was too hysterical; his episodes were too violent; he described too minutely and constantly. But that quality which had controlled him, he at last controlled, and it has served him well. His episodes are temperately handled, yet intrinsically powerful: his perception of shades of character is delicate; his manner of portrayal felicitous. He can enter sympathetically into the most diverse natures, and shed light upon their structure and development. His faculty of observation is exceptional, and he still needs to broaden rather than to sharpen his gaze — to see things less in detail and more in the mass.

**New York's novelist.**

One of Fawcett's best novels of contemporary life is "The House at High-Bridge"; in quite another style is his weird, imaginative tale of "Douglas Duane," in which a quasi-scientific miracle of transferred life is described. His volume of "Social Silhouettes" of New York character shows wide knowledge of

the subject, and satiric power. In addition to his many novels, he has written two volumes of poetry, "Song and Story," and "Romance and Revery," which include some excellent narrative poems, several impassioned lyrics, and a number of good sonnets. All are done in the modern manner, but are stronger in imagination than is most contemporary verse.

**George Parsons Lathrop** (1851–) was born of American parents in the Sandwich Islands, and has lived several years in Europe; but his literary life has been spent in New York and Boston. He is of a poetic and imaginative temperament, and has written delicate and beautiful poems, and some that are strong and ringing. His best novels deal in psychological analysis: the most widely known is "An Echo of Passion," a powerful and moving story. Other stories of his are "In the Distance," where the scene is among the New England hills; "Newport," which pictures life at the fashionable watering-place; and "Would you Kill Him?" containing an admirable description of a panic on Wall Street. But it is evident that Lathrop has much yet in reserve: it is likely that he will live to produce something which will throw into the shade his former efforts, honorable though they are. Besides his poems and novels, Lathrop constructed a play in blank verse, "Elaine," which was successfully enacted at the Madison Square Theatre in New York.

**Sarah Orne Jewett** (1849–) is a New Englander by birth; and her stories depict the quiet phases of New England life. She has a delicate and quiet vein of genius, which was apparent in her first book, "Deephaven," and has been perfected by experience. She contemplates nature and humanity with a seeing eye, and describes them with a firm restraint of touch. Her little narratives are like reflections in a Claude-Lorraine mirror — truthful, harmonious, artistic. The thread of plot is slight, but pleasing: the charm is in the refinement and subtlety of the telling. Some of her most delightful work is in the volume called "A White Heron." She is a tender, serene and culti-

vated writer. She can scarcely be termed analytic; her touch in that direction is very light; but she gives more attention to the mental and moral idiosyncrasies of her characters than to their physical manifestations.

**Philander Deming** (1829–) somewhat resembles Miss Jewett in his style and choice of subjects. He gives a quiet and sympathetic picture of quiet and retired lives, and of their environment. Nothing is strained or over-colored: the touches are delicate but truthful, and every touch tells. The moral ideal of the author is pure and high, and there is a lovely artistic completeness in each tale. Deming has written very little; but such stories as "Lida Ann" and "Tompkins" make up for quantity by quality.

**Constance Fenimore Woolson** (1845–1894) began twenty years ago to contribute short stories to "Appleton's Journal" and other periodicals; and more recently gained deserved reputation by her novels "Anne" and "For the Major." **F. J. Stimson** ("J. S. of Dale") (1855–) is the author of several stories which show fine literary taste and ability; and **Arthur Sherburne Hardy** (1847–), in "But yet a Woman," has presented a touching story of a woman's life and love, told with a reserve and an insight that evince a sincere literary gift.

### *Romantic Novelists.*

Under this head we group those writers who seek to convey their effects by means of the drift and situations of the story, rather than by the development and analysis of character. In the best novels of this class, the characters and the plot are so well harmonized that the unfolding of the one is the unfolding of both; in the least successful, the characters are mere pegs on which the story hangs. Books of the former division approximate to the analytic group: those of the latter merge into the merely sensational. But some of the most deservedly popular novels in the world have been written by romantic novelists.

**Helen Hunt Jackson** ("H. H.") (1831–1885). It was only in the latter years of her life that Mrs. Jackson became a novelist. Her earlier product was in the form of poetry. She thought deeply and with a kind of exalted logic on spiritual questions, and expounded her conclusions in concise and weighty verse. Beauty and passion were not her chief objects; she wished to state clearly the issue of the conflict between the human and the divine in nature. She had not Emerson's sublime vision, but her aim was similar to his: and in his "Parnassus" he cordially recognizes her success. She studied the trials and temptations of life as problems, and formulated the solutions in grave and eloquent rhyme.

Helen Hunt Jackson.

But the winning and humorous side of her character appeared in her prose descriptions of travel and phases of existence, collected under the title of "Bits of Travel." It would be difficult to speak too highly of the style and spirit of these narrations. The humor is all-pervading, and carries pathos with it: a lovely, human light irradiates the pages, and makes the foibles of the characters as charming as their virtues. A broad, charitable, human mind is at work, with the delicate insight of a woman, and a steady healthfulness of mood that we are more accustomed to expect from the masculine genius.

**Attractive "Bits of Travel."**

Several volumes of a character more or less similar to "Bits of Travel" had been put forth, when, towards the close of her life, circumstances drew Mrs. Jackson's attention to the wrongs inflicted by the agents of our government upon the Indians. She made an earnest and exhaustive study of the situation, and her sympathies became passionately enlisted. The same hatred of

injustice and enthusiasm for right that actuated the American colonies in their revolt against English oppression, and the Abolitionists of New England in their crusade against the principle of slavery, now aroused Mrs. Jackson to become the champion of the Indians. Her whole heart and soul were devoted to their cause; and the seeds of fatal disease apparent in her constitution served only to hasten her action and intensify her zeal. The first literary result was the publication of "A Century of Dishonor," in which an impassioned appeal is made from the base and selfish to the nobler altruistic sentiment of the nation: the wrongs of the Indians are eloquently and vehemently set forth, and a ringing demand made for humanity and justice. But Mrs. Jackson recognized that in order to reach the mass of the people, it would be necessary to cast her ideas in the form of fiction; and accordingly, no sooner was "A Century of Dishonor" published, than she set about the writing of her great story of "Ramona." This was the expiring effort of her genius, and is perhaps its most powerful and memorable illustration. The story is interesting, the literary skill is adequate, and the purpose of the book does not lead the writer to forget the obligations of art. It marks the worthy close of a noble career, and insures Mrs. Jackson a place in the literature of our country which few of her sex have attained.

**"A Century of Dishonor."**

**Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward** (1844–). Imaginative speculations as to human life beyond the grave have occupied a large share of this writer's attention, and have given her a wide and unique reputation. Such books as "The Gates Ajar," "The Gates Between" and "Beyond the Gates," arguing from the life we know to the life we know not, could not fail to attract popular curiosity; and the fact that the conclusions they pronounce are agreeable to hope, are morally elevated and have a sort of rational plausibility, has caused them to be popular. Apart from this series of books, Miss Phelps has devoted herself to story-writing. The

**The other world in fiction.**

stories have a manifest moral, but they are conceived intensely, and ably executed. The trials, temptations and sorrows of the poor are tenderly portrayed, and the conflict in woman's nature between the claims of love and the aspirations for a career is sympathetically depicted — as in "The Story of Avis" and "Doctor Zay." The female characters in her stories are often excellent: the men are apt to be unreal or extravagant. Extravagance, in thought and style, is Miss Phelps's chief foible. She is vividly emotional, — at times almost hysterical, — and this trait is detrimental to her artistic integrity. The personal element is too prominent: she is never so successful as when she speaks in some other character than her own. As soon as she begins to talk about her characters, the reader is liable to receive a shock. It sometimes seems as if, to her mind, sense and grammar were incompatible. It is singular that one so competent to delineate what is tender, pure and spiritual in human life should be so destitute of rhetorical conscience. Apart from these faults, her stories are often developed with an exquisite spontaneity, heightened by touches that only a woman — we might say, only Miss Phelps — could apply. Their merits and beauties cannot, like their faults, be analyzed; the finest of them are too fine to be described. Though often short, they touch large subjects with truth and effect. "The Madonna of the Tubs" and "Jack" are good instances of both her faults and her merits. Since her recent marriage she has produced, in conjunction with her husband, a novel the scene of which is in Palestine, at the time of the Christian era.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps.

**Edward P. Roe** (1838–1888) entered the army as chaplain of a cavalry regiment, and held that position throughout the war. His regiment saw much active service, and Mr. Roe was made acquainted with human nature in its most undisguised and spontaneous forms. At the time of the Chicago fire, he visited that city, and was moved to write a story, of which the incident of the fire should be the centre of interest. This novel — "Barriers Burned Away" — achieved an immediate and immense popularity, which encouraged its author to proceed on the same lines. Up to the time of his death he continued to produce one or two stories every year, and the aggregate sales of his books did not fall short of a million. Besides his novels, he wrote several valuable treatises on fruit-raising and gardening ("Success with Small Fruits," "The Home Acre," etc.) which were founded on the result of practical experience.

Roe did not possess the fine literary gift that it has become common to expect in successful writers nowadays; his style is commonplace, and there are no lofty flights of imagination in his stories. His books have a moral purpose: they inculcate a lesson: the love-interest is conventional, passing through difficulties and troubles to a happy conclusion. But Roe's readers are the great middle-class of the American people: the men and women whose solid qualities constitute the social and industrial prosperity of the nation. These people read Roe's books not for entertainment merely, but for the truth, the hope, the manly goodness that they everywhere display. The writer was educated in the sternest and tenderest school that has been open to the men of his generation. The rough soldiers with whom he associated loved and trusted him as a brother: and on the eve of battles, or at the bedside of the dying, he was the recipient of their confidences. With these men he talked, lived and sympathized for years, sharing their privations, combating their evils, shouldering their responsibilities, vindicating before them the love and goodness of God. No man among them was manlier than he. He learned there what human nature is, and took to heart the lesson. His faith

**A wholesome novelist.**

and charity were strengthened and deepened by experience. His whole heart was in every effort that he made, and in his literary efforts no less than in others. He wrote because he felt impelled to write, and wished to convey to others what he had himself believed — that man is master of his moral fate, and that evil is never unconquerable by good. He wrote with emotion, conviction and reverence; and produced a series of healthy, hopeful, masculine stories, the characters in which were drawn from that great class of the common people to which he appealed. Posterity may not preserve them, but they have merited their popularity, in having been the source of innocent entertainment and moral benefit to millions of readers.

**Lew Wallace** (1828–) is the author of two romances not less popular than Roe's. Like Roe, he lacks the literary gift — a quality hard to define, save by negatives. But it would be rash to say that books like these succeed because they are not literary. Numberless books not less ordinary in style fall from the press still-born. Literary excellence is no more a recommendation than a deterrent to the mass of readers. Wallace and Roe are popular in their day because of some real worth in what they have to say, irrespective of the manner in which it is said. General Wallace's first book was a story of the conquest of Mexico by Cortez. The epoch of "The Fair God" is picturesquely described, and the narrative is full of action, color and excitement. The combats and battles are vigorously portrayed, and brave men and lovely women make love and mischief as in the romances of old time. The

Lew Wallace.

archæological knowledge displayed by the writer is abundant and accurate. His other novel — "Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ" — takes us back to the beginning of our era, and summons before us a series of strange and splendid scenes. The best-known passage is that describing a chariot race — a vigorous and stirring example of descriptive prose. Wallace's stories carry the reader swiftly along, after the manner of Scott's romances: but he has none of the great Scotchman's power of drawing character, nor anything of his humor.

**Two stirring romances.**

**Charles King** (1844–) is a graduate of West Point, and served gallantly in the Fifth Cavalry; he was repeatedly wounded in the Indian wars. In 1879 his wounds compelled him to go on the retired list; since then he has applied himself to authorship. In some half-dozen or more lively and romantic stories he has depicted army life on the plains, giving an inside view of the American soldier's post-bellum existence that has a historical value, as well as a strong narrative interest. His heroines are beautiful, and his heroes dashing and attractive. Most of his novels appeared in "Lippincott's Magazine," and found many readers. They are stories of incident, but the character-drawing is often good. They have not the literary merit of some of John Strange Winter's stories, but their healthy, hearty sentiment compensates for many deficiencies. Captain King's work improves in quality as he goes on. Among his books are "The Colonel's Daughter," "Dunraven Ranch," "From the Ranks" and "The Deserter."

**Capital stories of military life.**

**William Henry Bishop** (1847–) is more properly a literary man than is any of the three writers last mentioned: he has talent, depth, large experience of life and a decided vein of odd and original humor, the more remarkable for the reticence observed in its use. But in the making of his books, he has had the misfortune to be distracted by two opposing influences. His natural tendency, as exhibited in his best short stories, is to

choose singular and recondite subjects, and to treat them somewhat after the manner of Poe and Fitz-James O'Brien. His literary conscience, on the other hand, inclines him to accept the gospel embodied in the works of James and Howells; and his longer, serious novels are accordingly overburdened with description, and with comments on character. But he has not quite the art to make them attractive, and his novels, though meritorious, are, therefore, apt to be dull. If some such motive as that which is found in "One of the Thirty Pieces," or in "McIntyre's False Face," were expanded into a theme for a novel, the result might be valuable: but productions like "Detmold," "The House of a Merchant Prince" and "The Yellow Snake," though they contain romantic stories, are rendered sluggish and ineffective by the load of explanation and analysis that is heaped upon them. Bishop has written a volume of travel-sketches on "Mexico and the Lost Provinces," which are excellent examples of that kind of work. He has lately been living abroad.

**F. Marion Crawford** (1854–) published his first novel, "Mr. Isaacs," in 1883, but his fecundity has been great, and every year since then he has added at least two volumes to the list of his writings. They are all romantic stories of a high class, and, speaking generally, they show a steady improvement in style and literary quality. Mr. Crawford was educated in Europe, and has spent most of his life there and in India: consequently the majority of his novels have a foreign background. He is still at the height of his productiveness, so that it is too soon to determine his place in our literature: but, on the basis of what he has already done, it cannot fail to be a high and honorable one. His best-known works are "Mr. Isaacs," "A Roman Singer," "Zoroaster."

**Henry Harland** ("Sydney Luska") (1861–) became known a few years ago as the author of "Mrs. Peixada" and "The Yoke of the Thorah," novels dealing with Jewish character and life in New York. It was a new field, the stories were striking and

unhackneyed and the characters were strongly presented. Few writers so young as Harland have shown better literary taste, or faculties more promising. He followed up his success with other stories and short novels, which, if not better done than the first, were at least not inferior to them. But he recognized that the vein he was working had its limits, and in 1888 he sailed for England, in search of fresh materials and impressions, and he still resides there.

In addition to the above may be named **John Habberton,** author of the famous little story of "Helen's Babies" and of "Brueton's Bayou," "All He Knew" and many other novels; **H. H. Boyesen,** author of "Gunnar" and numerous well-written novels and romances; **Robert Grant,** author of "The Little Tin Gods on Wheels," "An Average Man" and other novels, and of books for boys; **Louisa M. Alcott,** author of "Little Women" and other charming books for children; **Frances Hodgson Burnett,** author of "That Lass o' Lowrie's," "Little Lord Fauntleroy," etc.; **Louis Pendleton,** who has written some admirable Southern stories—"In the Wire Grass," "Bewitched," etc.; **Christian Reid,** a Southern writer, who has written a series of excellent stories, beginning with "Valerie Aylmer"; **Anna Katherine Greene,** whose specialty is sensational stories of the better class, like "The Leavenworth Case"; **Amèlie Rives Chanler,** whose story of "The Quick or the Dead?" created a temporary impression; and **Edgar Saltus,** a brilliant and epigrammatic novelist, bold and unconventional in his choice and handling of subjects, whose orbit it is still too early to calculate.

### *Dialect Novelists.*

The United States, though united, are as yet far from being homogeneous as regards the character of their inhabitants; and the habits and speech of the people of one section are still strange to those of another. A class of writers has naturally arisen whose mission it is to report the ways of outlying districts to their countrymen. As a rule, the prophets of such regions

are also natives of them, and they have made it their special function to reproduce the dialect of the neighborhood. Many of them make a study of negro solecisms; others of the *patois* of the New Orleans creoles, or of the mountaineers of Tennessee and Virginia, or of the blue-grass Kentuckians. The term "Dialect Novelists" is not always completely descriptive of these writers, but no other is, on the whole, so comprehensive. Artistically employed, dialect illuminates character, and individualizes the speaker; but if used without proper discrimination, it has a precisely opposite effect, and actually obscures both characters and story. Dialect stories have been in demand in the magazines of late years, and have been much debased by incompetent and pseudo-humorous writers. But there remains a body of literature in which the principle is applied with discretion and good effect. In the process of time, dialect must disappear, and then these books will acquire a philological value in addition to whatever literary worth they may possess.

**Joel Chandler Harris** (1848–) was born in Eatonton, Central Georgia, and has all his life been an inhabitant of that state: he lives at present in Atlanta, and edits the "Constitution," one of the influential papers of the South. As a writer of political editorials, he is broad-minded and progressive, and has done much to promote cordial relations between the South and the North.

Joel Chandler Harris.

But his fame, which extends all over the United States, and has found its way to England and the British colonies in all parts of the globe, is founded upon writings of a very different sort. It is less than ten years ago since innumerable readers began to read and extol "Uncle Remus." The

volume that bore this title contained some of the songs, some of the philosophy and some of the quaint legends of animals current among negroes in the South before the war. "Uncle Remus" himself is a plantation darkey of the old school, who tells to his master's little boy marvellous and fascinating stories, and sings the songs and preaches the doctrines of his race, using throughout the negro dialect in its classic purity. The success of the first collection of sketches (which were originally contributed to the columns of the "Atlanta Constitution") led Harris to supplement them with "A Rainy Day with Uncle Remus" and "Nights with Uncle Remus." All classes of readers enjoy these inimitable books. Children delight in the personifications of animals, and in their endless plotting and counter-plotting; the elders are charmed by the sly humor, the original philosophy and the fantastic conceits; the critics praise the faithful skill and literary genius that render the stories masterpieces in themselves, as well as records of a folk-lore heretofore unknown to literature. Harris had a high ideal of what dialect sketches should and should not be. In the preface to "Uncle Remus" he says: "If the language of Uncle Remus fails to give vivid hints of the really poetic imagination of the negro: if it fails to embody the quaint and homely humor which was his most prominent characteristic: if it does not suggest a certain picturesque sensitiveness, — a curious exaltation of mind and temperament not to be expressed in words, — then I have reproduced the form of dialect merely, and not the essence, and my attempt may be accounted a failure." Tried by this high test, his work is the best of its kind.

**The master of dialect stories.**

"Free Joe and the Rest of the World" is a story, in which humor and pathos play equal parts, of a negro who had been freed by the suicide of his master, while the rest of his race was still enslaved. But the negro has not monopolized Harris's attention. In "Little Compton," "Azalia," "Trouble on Lost Mountain" and "At Teague Poteet's," he has dealt with peculiar phases of Southern life, and has shown the same careful and

accurate study, and power of truthful and delicate characterization, that marked his earlier work. One is tempted to say that it is in Harris's option to make himself the foremost American novelist; and since he is still a young man, it is worth his while to try.

**George Washington Cable** (1844–). After a youth of privation, self-abnegation and hard work (including two years' active service in the Confederate ranks) Cable found himself a journalist in his native city of New Orleans. He was a born writer of stories, and was finally led to picture the life about him in the guise of fiction. It was a life which he knew thoroughly in all its branches, and which had never, up to this time, had an adequate expositor. It was a rich field for romantic and poetic cultivation. Creole life in New Orleans, with its unique social and political conditions, furnished the basis of his books, — "Old Creole Days," "The Grandissimes," "Dr. Sevier" and "Madame Delphine." He has also published descriptive sketches of the Acadians in Louisiana, and several historical studies. In a literary sense, he has made his native state his own.

George Washington Cable.

The creoles are a people characterized by warm impulses, fiery passions and gracious and graceful behavior. Cable's kindly heart and love of beauty fits him to enter sympathetically into the portrayal of their romantic and chivalric existence; but though he makes the most of the charm of this peculiar Southern life, he deals with higher subjects than those that appeal only to taste: he deals with wrongs and grievances, with the strong passions of love and ambition; pathos is, perhaps, his strongest

note. The story of Bras Coupé in "The Grandissimes" is one of the most vivid and pathetic stories in our literature. The young schoolmaster in "Au Large" is a peculiarly touching figure, and the Acadian life which the story represents to us seems to be a study of life on another planet. His work is rich in descriptions, which, however, interpret and seldom overload the theme. He depicts the strange architecture and aspect of the old creole city; and he shows the loathsome, festering swamp as it never had been shown. He reproduces with admirable skill the *patois* of the people, and envelops characters and scenes in a warm artistic atmosphere. Human nature, and human individuality, are never absent from his stories, and he has added a distinct page to our literature.

**A Southern novelist.**

**Edward Eggleston** (1837–). The life of frontier settlements is Dr. Eggleston's favorite theme: he finds there material to enlist his sympathies and stimulate his thought. In his youth, as a preacher travelling from hamlet to hamlet, he became familiar with the character and ways of the plain, uncultivated, indomitable people who subdue the wilderness: there the artificialities that obscure and hamper the free expression of human nature were unknown, and it manifested itself freely, in its ugliness and in its ineradicable beauty. It was not like the barbarous and romantic life described by Bret Harte; for here were women and children, and domestic joys and sorrows. It was a phase of existence rich in sterling human interest, which had hitherto lacked portrayal. Eggleston was the man to supply the omission; he had observant eyes and a stout and tender heart, and the physical robustness of the pioneers themselves. His nature was earnest and energetic, warmed by humor, and graced with an instinct for the picturesque in character and scenery.

**The novelist and historian of the frontier.**

Stories and novels, therefore, came readily from his pen: but his talent was better adapted for historical work than for fiction. The final effect of his novels is powerful: but the progress of

events is delayed by a too minute and realistic attention to detail. He is as exhaustive as Balzac, without the redeeming magic of Balzac's artistic atmosphere. He does not sufficiently recognize the relative value of component parts: all alike are flooded with a full light. He has not the power of condensing a volume of observation into a paragraph; of grouping and shading. He wished to tell not the truth only, but the whole truth; and his stories are consequently not so much works of art as records of fact, in a thin disguise of fiction. But even as they are, they were well worth writing. "The Hoosier Schoolmaster" is a fine novel; and "The Circuit Rider," "The End of the World," "The Mystery of Metropolisville," "Roxy" and "The Graysons" constitute a substantial and comprehensive picture of the American frontier.

Eggleston, however, had already learned his own powers and the importance of the field he was working. He conceived the idea of writing the complete history of "Life in the Thirteen Colonies," arranging it in such divisions as "The Beginning of a Nation," "The Planting of New England," "The Aborigines and the Colonists," "Indian War in the Colonies," "Commerce in the Colonies" and "Social Life in the Colonies." For several years past he has been laboring with all his might on this work, has consulted all the sources of information in this and in foreign countries and has incidentally collected a large library of unique character and great value. Nine years have already been devoted to this history, and three more are likely to pass ere it is completed. Chapters of it have occasionally appeared in the "Century" magazine, and some parts of it have been published in volume form. It seems likely to be, in its entirety, one of the most useful and readable of American histories.

**Charles Egbert Craddock** (Mary N. Murfree) is one of the most promising of the younger Southern novelists. Her early sketches, first published in the "Atlantic Monthly," met with immediate recognition; and her later work has fairly maintained her early promise. A collection of her short stories was aptly named

"In the Tennessee Mountains," and all her work might be included under this general title, for her purpose has uniformly been to depict the life of this region. The everlasting hills, calmly observant of human vicissitudes, form a harmonious background for her wild, pathetic and tragic scenes. The mountaineers whom she portrays are a taciturn, serious, secret race, with few ideas, but tenacious of those they have. Her men are stern and rude; her women are reserved, undemonstrative, lacking in feminine grace and charm, but intense and unalterable both in their loves and in their hates. This strange people, with their uncompromising speech, their peculiar dialect, and their rugged natural environment, form an unfamiliar and powerful picture, to which the author has succeeded in imparting life and vividness.

Miss Murfree's works are, "In the Tennessee Mountains" (1884), "Where the Battle was Fought" (1884), "In the Clouds" (1886), "The Story of Keedon Bluffs" (1887), "The Despot of Broomsedge Cove" (1888), "In the Stranger Peoples' Country" (1891), "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains" and "Down the Ravine."

**E. W. Howe** (1854–). The position in fiction of this writer is not easily fixed. He is one of our most impressive and imaginative story-tellers; his stories are realistic in texture and ideal in conception: pathos, tragedy and humor are at his command, and yet he appears indifferent to artistic construction. He does not write dialect, — all his characters speak ordinary colloquial English, — and nevertheless his scenes are laid in unfamiliar places, and among primitive and uneducated people. Howe is profoundly in earnest, and deals with life in its essence, but his writing is to the last degree simple and devoid of artifice. The reader may see nothing in his books, or everything, according to his own mental stature and emotional experience. Their atmosphere is very pronounced, softening all details and bringing them into harmony. The author is original; he does not reflect other authors' books or methods. He interprets the world in his

own way, and his personal impress is upon his every sentence. He never varies the tone of his straightforward talk. His field of observation has not been large, nor his reading extensive, but he has thoroughly digested what he has seen and known, and from the elements he creates the whole. His name is attached to but four novels, — "The Mystery of the Locks," "The Story of a Country Town," "The Moonlight Boy" and "A Man Story"; but within these limits he has done work which will be remembered when much that is cleverer and more sensational is forgotten.

**Rebecca Harding Davis** (1831–) came into notice in the early years of the war by the publication of a powerful story of the border states, entitled "Life in the Iron Mills." "I write from the border of the battlefield," she says in her preface, "and I find in it no theme for shallow argument or flimsy rhymes." Had Mrs. Davis devoted herself wholly to pure literature, it is probable that she would have taken the highest place among our woman writers. But her best powers have been devoted to journalism, and books bearing her name are too seldom seen. Her best stories are "Margaret Howth," "Waiting for the Verdict" and "Galbraith."

**Richard Malcolm Johnston** (1822–) is by birth a Georgian, and he introduced to literature the Georgia "Cracker." He depicts with sympathetic delight the simple country life with which he is familiar, and reproduces with singular felicity the vernacular of the plantations. His chief works are "The Dukesborough Tales," "Mr. Absalom Billingslea and other Georgia Folks," "Old Mark Langston" and an excellent "History of English Literature," written in collaboration with W. H. Brown.

**Thomas Nelson Page** (1853–), a Virginian, gained notice by two dialect stories, "Meh Lady" and "Marse Chan," contributed to magazines. They relate to the war and the subsequent

period. No more truthful pictures of the sentiments and spirit of the Southern people can elsewhere be found in the same compass. He has latterly published some useful articles on South literature before and after the war. **H. C. Bunner** has written some scholarly and humorous stories of life in old New York. **T. A. Janvier** has made a special study of Mexico. **James Lane Allen,** whose home is half way between the Atlantic and the Pacific, is a general writer of marked excellence; and **Brander Matthews** (1852–) is a novelist, poet, essayist and literary and dramatic critic whose productions are never dull, and often possess high literary and artistic merit.

### *Naturalists.*

We now leave the domain of fiction, and come to those writers who have devoted themselves to the description of aspects of nature and of natural history, and to the pursuits that belong to country life. Henry Thoreau is the type of this class of authors, the representatives of which are not numerous; though the development and settlement of the west coast is likely to multiply them.

**John Burroughs** (1837–) was born on a farm in New York state, but his naturalistic proclivities did not develop at once. "Almost my first literary attempts," he says in an autobiographical fragment, "were moral reflections, somewhat in the Johnsonese style. As a youth, I was a philosopher; as a young man, I was an Emersonian; as a middle-aged man, I am a literary naturalist; but always have I been an essayist." He is spoken of as a follower of Thoreau, but their differences are more notable than their similarities. Thoreau's writings are deliberately personal: Burroughs's are as impersonal as he can make them. Thoreau is arrogant and creative: Burroughs is meditative and receptive. Burroughs follows the method of science, and the accuracy of his statements can be relied on: Thoreau affected

the poetic view, and his work as a naturalist is untrustworthy. Burroughs presents himself to nature in a neutral attitude, not to take notes of malice prepense, but from spontaneous impulse. "I come, gradually," he says, "to have a feeling that I want to write upon a given theme — rain, for instance, or snow; but what I may have to say upon it is as vague as the background of one of Millet's pictures. My hope is entirely in the feeling or attraction which draws my mind that way; the subject is congenial, it sticks to me; whenever it occurs to me, it awakens as it were a warm personal response."

**An author who is a genuine naturalist.**

Besides his special work, Burroughs has written essays on Thoreau, Emerson, Matthew Arnold and Carlyle. Among his books are "Wake Robin," "Winter Sunshine," "Fresh Fields," "Signs and Seasons," "Indoor Studies" and "Pepacton."

**John James Audubon** (1780–1801) belongs to another generation, but his predilections, and the fact that he has had no rivals in his chosen line, render him still a contemporary. With extraordinary enthusiasm, he carried out his great enterprise of describing the habits and executing colored portraits of the birds of America. Most of these portraits are of life size, and are accurate in every detail. The letter-press of the gigantic volumes is not only scientifically valuable, but is written in a glowing and attractive style. He was a man of picturesque and romantic character, and the devotion with which his wife assisted him in the preparation of his work is a charming feature of their joint history. **William Hamilton Gibson** (1848–) is an artist by profession, and has made exquisite delineations of landscape, forests and hedge-rows, in black and white. At length he began to write on the same subjects. Both his articles and his drawings were contributed to the magazines, chiefly to "The Century" and "Harper's." He illustrated the agricultural works of his friend, E. P. Roe. The author of "Ten Acres Enough" made a wide impression by the publication of that useful and

practical guide to small farming; and "Ik Marvel," in his "My Farm at Edgewood," performed a similar service to suburban agriculture. **R. G. Pardee** wrote "A Complete Manual for the Cultivation of Strawberries"; and **Charles Barnard** is the author of "The Strawberry Garden," "My Ten Rod Farm" and other books, in which agriculture and humor are combined.

### *Essayists and Historians.*

This group, if it were made complete, would be a very wide one, for a majority of American authors find occasion, now and then, to write an essay. A large number, also, make that their chief, if not their sole occupation. The essay is simply an article of any length on any given subject, and could be made to include newspaper editorials. We shall confine ourselves to such essayists as have become eminent in that branch of writing, and who have displayed true literary qualifications. Contemporary historians are comparatively few, but there is an increasing tendency towards historical research.

**John Fiske** (1842–) is the most substantial and enlightened figure in American philosophy. His culture is wide and scholarly, embracing the folk-lore of Europe, American history, the problems of education and cognate matters. But he is best known as the interpreter of the Darwinian and Spencerian philosophies, which he has expounded both in books and on the lecture-platform. Nor is he merely a paraphrasist of what has been already written: on the contrary, he is an able original investigator on evolutionary lines, and has carried the analysis, by logical steps, to heights not attained by Spencer himself. According to Fiske, the principle of evolution does not conflict with the ideas of God and of a future spiritual life, but confirms them. He has made a masterly discussion of these subjects in his "The Destiny of Man viewed in the Light of his Origin" and his "Idea of God as effected by Modern Knowledge." Thus Fiske controverts the Agnostics, and brings powerful support to

the affirmative side of the controversy. Some of his other works are "Myths and Myth-Makers," "Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy," "Darwinism and Other Essays," "Excursions of an Evolutionist," "American Political Ideas," "The Critical Period in American History." Fiske is now at work on a "History of the American People," in which the question of the philosophical principles with which he has identified himself will be traced in the development of civilization and national character in this country.

**George William Curtis** (1824–1892) was a Rhode Islander by birth, but came to New York in his sixteenth year, and served for a time in a counting-house. But his temperament was literary, sentimental and progressive, and when the Brook Farm Community was started, Curtis was among its members. After three or four years of transcendental farming, there and elsewhere, he visited Europe and the East, remaining four years. The literary fruits of this journey were contained in two volumes of sentiment, description and fancy, entitled "Nile Notes of a Howadji" and "The Howadji in Syria." Returning about 1850, he contributed to the New York "Tribune" a series of letters from Saratoga, Newport and Lake George, which were later collected under the title of "Lotus-Eating." They are very different in character from such letters as would be written nowadays. The author cultivated his emotions, indulged in poetical reflections, and quoted freely from the poets.

**The Howadji in literature.**

A little later in life, he fell into a gently satirical vein, and in "The Potiphar Papers," contributed to "Putnam's Magazine," he sought to rival the famous "Salmagundi" of Washington Irving. "Prue and I" is a volume of sketches in narrative form; and "Trumps" is, fortunately, the author's only attempt at novel-writing.

In 1852 began Curtis's connection with "Harper's Magazine." He created the department called "The Editor's Easy Chair" and has filled it, with one or two brief intermissions, ever since.

These essays treat of all manner of topics, are rich in literary allusions, easy and cultivated in style, and are characterized by a sort of refined good humor. Of late years, as might be expected, he has begun to repeat himself somewhat, but the department is still a popular one in the magazine. Meanwhile, in 1857, he began "The Lounger" papers in "Harper's Weekly," and in 1863 assumed the editorship of the periodical, and wrote editorials on political and municipal topics. For several years before and after the war, he was a familiar figure on lyceum platforms. In 1884 he "bolted" the Republican party, but instead of identifying himself with the Democrats, established an independent party, which became known as the "Mugwumps." It will be noticed that by far the greater part of Curtis's writings remains in the columns of periodicals. Were they to be taken thence, and republished in book form, they would fill some thirty good-sized volumes.

**Charles Dudley Warner** (1829–) was born in Plainfield, Massachusetts, educated at Hamilton College, was for a year a surveyor on the Missouri frontier, studied law in Philadelphia, and practised as a lawyer in Chicago: but in 1860 he made his final home in Hartford, Connecticut, where he edited the "Hartford Courant." In 1875 he made an extended trip abroad, and during the last few years he has made a thorough exploration of the Southern and Pacific States, and of the Mississippi region.

This is the record of a man eager for experience, and inquisitive to see whatever sights the world could afford him. But though his history may indicate restlessness, Warner himself, so far as his character and temperament may be discerned in his books, is one of the most restful and leisurely of American authors. He sustains the impact of the world with a humorous smile; he sees everything, but sees it in an entertaining light; he is tranquil and observant where another would be bewildered and fractious. Whether digging and planting in his garden, or contemplating the majesty of the Sphinx at Memphis, he is always true to himself — an

**A typical American.**

American of Americans, and therefore free from prejudices and provincialisms, but redolent of the native flavor, unterrified by conventions and pretences, yet reverent always in the presence of what deserves reverence; testing all things with the talisman of simple common-sense, which counteracts false enchantments and restores objects to their real shapes. To look upon the world independently and, as it were, primitively, and to report the unhackneyed and untraditional truth about it, is a rare and precious faculty; it is of the essence of the best type of American humor, which is Warner's. He makes himself impersonal by identifying himself with his own reader; it is as if the reader were writing the book, or the writer reading it. La Rochefoucauld asserts that there is something not unpleasing to us in the misfortunes of our best friends; but Warner enjoys his own mishaps quite as much as could the most impartial spectator. The æsthetic sense is also full-grown in him; he never misses a point of beauty, and he discriminates infallibly between the pinchbeck and the genuine. He is a first-rate literary critic — one who can not only dissect, but create; and the earnest and sensible thought he has bestowed upon social and political questions renders his judgments thereupon weighty and illuminating. In his humorous and meditative essays, he says all the good things that one wishes one had said one's self; in his narratives of travel, he tells us precisely the things we wanted to know, which no one else had told; in his critical vein, he so lucidly reveals the structure and character of the thing criticised that we are ready to credit our own insight, rather than his, with the verdict.

Charles Dudley Warner.

"My Summer in a Garden," the first book that brought him

into notice, is a collection of papers contributed to the "Hartford Courant." Quiet, irresistible fun is the ruling trait of the volume: no one who knows what a garden and human nature are, can withstand the excruciating veracity of its comedy. "Back-Log Studies" is a series of meditations on all subjects, with graver passages interspersed among the smiling ones: for mere literary charm and excellence it has never been surpassed by the author, and scarcely by any one else. "In the Wilderness" takes us to the Adirondacks, and portrays the fascination of the woods, the humors of camping-out, the terrors of the black bear and the excitement of the deer-hunt. "My Winter on the Nile" gives a truer picture of travel and scenery in Egypt than has been painted elsewhere; "In the Levant" carries on the story, taking the charm along with it; "Saunterings," "Baddeck, and that Sort of Thing" and "Roundabout Journeys," are in a similar vein. "Being a Boy" is a juvenile classic, as fascinating to fathers as to sons. "Their Pilgrimage" is a description of American summer-resorts, with a delightful love-story interwoven in it; and he has recently published a book on California which is likely to stimulate all well-disposed persons to emigrate thither. His biographies of Captain John Smith, and of Washington Irving, are eminently just and enlightening; and he has, during the last few years, actually succeeded in making readable the "humorous department" of one of our leading magazines. Surely such a man as this deserves the gratitude of his countrymen.

His books.

**Richard Grant White** (1821–1885) was born and educated in New York, began life as a lawyer there, but soon devoted himself to musical, philological and Shakespearian criticism, and to literature in general. He was a man of penetrating and independent intellect, of imperturbable and somewhat sarcastic humor, pugnacious but good-tempered in disposition, strong in common-sense, exquisitely alive to sensuous beauty and deeply versed in books and men. His "Words and their Uses," an admirable and unhackneyed guide to sound prose composition,

was published in 1870; his "Every Day English," about ten years later. During this period he also wrote monthly papers for "The Galaxy" magazine, and articles, sometimes critical, sometimes controversial. In the latter, he was especially felicitous; few men were better able to annihilate an opponent, while maintaining thorough good-humor. A collection of some of these fugitive papers of his would make a delightful volume. He edited two editions of Shakespeare, with an "Essay on the Authorship of the Three Parts of Henry VI.," a treatise on "Memoirs of William Shakespeare," and "Studies in Shakespeare," which was his last production previous to his death. All these books display clear judgment and sound scholarship, and served to clear the air of much accumulated fog and nonsense. In 1876–7 White made a trip to England, which his previous training had qualified him to enjoy to the utmost. "England Within and Without" was the result of this visit, and its verdict upon the mother country was a very cordial and friendly one. A little later he published a novel, relating the experiences of an American in England, designed mainly to show the comical ignorance of this country obtaining amongst cultivated English people. White's musical criticisms have not been rescued from the periodicals in which they originally appeared; yet they are the best that have been written in this country. White was several inches over six feet in height, of spare, athletic figure, with marked aquiline features and a peculiarly suave and courteous manner. He was a charming companion, a hearty friend and a good enemy.

**A scholar in literature.**

**James Parton** (1822–1891), though by birth an Englishman, lived in this country from his sixth year. He wrote copiously and intelligently on biographical, historical and social topics. His essays on Smoking and Drinking, orlginally published in the "Atlantic Monthly," attracted much attention and comment. He was a man of broad views, though somewhat opinionated. He married the sister of N. P. Willis, known to readers as "Fanny Fern." She was eleven years his senior, and she died

in 1872. **Thomas Wentworth Higginson** (1823–) was an abolitionist, and a colonel of negro troops in the war. He is an accomplished literary man, master of an urbane and graceful style, and an advocate of wholesome and sensible regimen of life. He is the author of many volumes of biography, historical memoranda, criticism and narrative, and of one or two works of fiction; but he has done nothing commensurate with his reputation. Of his books we may name "Army Life in a Black Regiment," "Oldport Days," "Outdoor Papers," "Atlantic Essays," "Life of Margaret Fuller," "Young Folks' History of the United States" and "Malbone, an Oldport Romance." **Charles Godfrey Leland** (1824–), though born in Philadelphia, seems to have had a spice of the gypsy in his composition; he has seldom lived more than four years continuously in the same place, and some of his most valuable books treat of the gypsy race and language.

**An author with a gypsy vein.**

He has probably read more books than any other man living. He has an insatiable appetite for humor and "jokes," and his "Hans Breitmann's Ballads" had a vast popularity. He has travelled over the greater part of the world, and has lived many years in Europe. He has been editor, author and publisher by turns. He has taken a strong practical interest in the industrial education of the young. At the age of twenty-four he fought at the barricades of Paris in the Revolution: and during our civil war, fifteen years later, he was the first to advocate the emancipation of the slaves. He has translated Heine, the German poet and critic, and is the author of many books on philology and general literature. He is the founder of the "Home Arts Club" in London, and of the "Rabelais Club." He is at present residing in London, still engaged in literary work.

**Gail Hamilton** (18—), whose real name is Abigail Dodge, began her literary career as a humorist; she has continued it as a social essayist and reformer, and has also been a writer of political leaders in newspapers. She possesses both humor and wit in a high degree, and of a spontaneous and original flavor.

She has singular vigor and facility of literary expression, and a general literary faculty which may fairly be said to touch the boundaries of genius. Several of her earlier papers were contributed to the "Atlantic Monthly," at about the period of the civil war, and in the qualities of refined fun and felicitous description she has never surpassed them. Her best known books are "A New Atmosphere," "Gala Days," "Woman's Wrongs," "Stumbling Blocks," "The Battle of the Books," "Summer Rest," and "Woman's Worth and Worthlessness." She is Republican in politics; her humanity and charity are as broad as the human race.

**John Hay** (1839–) was born in Indiana, and was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1869. But on the breaking out of the war he went to Washington, and received the appointment of private secretary to Abraham Lincoln. The intimate relations thus established between the young man and the President enabled the former, twenty years later, to command the material for the history which, in conjunction with John G. Nicolay, he published in 1890.

During Andrew Johnson's administration, Hay — who held the rank of colonel in the Volunteers — was sent to Spain to fill a diplomatic post; and his impressions of that country were published on his return under the title of "Castilian Days." The book is gracefully written, with many touches of humor and fancy, and shows a warm and poetic appreciation of the romance and beauty of the home of the Hidalgos. During his youth, Colonel Hay had become familiar with certain features of frontier life west of the Mississippi, and, at about the time that Bret Harte was writing his first famous stories and poems, Hay published some rhymes, somewhat in Harte's manner, that were afterwards collected in a volume called "Pike County Ballads." They were written in the rude idioms of the frontier, were original and audacious in tone, but strong and true in sentiment. The best known among them are "Little Breeches" and "Jim Bludso."

**Early poems of frontier life.**

For a time, it seemed as if Harte might find a formidable rival in John Hay. But the latter married soon after; and being thereby absolved from further dependence on his pen, he practically retired from literature for several years, nor has he ever again taken up the vein that he had opened so vigorously and promisingly.

About 1885, however, it became known that Hay and Nicolay were engaged upon an elaborate biography of Lincoln, involving a history of the whole period covered by his active life. The publication of this work was begun in the "Century" magazine, and chapters from it were published continuously for two years. It is a thorough-going and important work, which, in its final form, fills ten volumes. It is especially rich in authentic documents, and it portrays the President in minutely lifelike and impressive colors. It is still too soon to decide whether the work possesses impartiality and breadth of view sufficient to place it above all necessity for future correction or modification. But it is, at least, a rich mine of material for subsequent investigation of the subject.

**Life of Lincoln.**

**John Bach McMaster** (1852–) has contributed a biography of Franklin to the "American Men of Letters" series, edited by Charles Dudley Warner. The arrangement of the leading facts of Franklin's career is clear and accurate, and will be useful to those who cannot spare time to read the great work on the same subject by John Bigelow. Professor McMaster's opinions about Franklin are, perhaps, less valuable: his own mind was scarcely mature enough to comprehend Franklin's nature and genius. The style of the book is modelled somewhat after Macaulay's, but is less sonorous and balanced. McMaster is also the author of a "History of the People of the United States," beginning with the period following the Revolutionary War. It is both lively and minute, and adopts the method of the English historian, Green, who treats of the development and character of the people themselves, rather than of the exploits of their nominal leaders. McMaster is not a hero-worshipper, and his estimate

of men who have been called great is not likely to err on the side of eulogy.

**Samuel Adams Drake** (1833–) is the author of several useful contributions towards the history of New England, of which the volume on "The Making of New England" may be taken as a fair type. It is designed to be a medium between the "skeleton" histories of our common schools, and the elaborate works required by scholars. It imparts a consistent human interest to the events it describes, and thus assists the memory in retaining them. The narrative, instead of groping blindly along in chronological sequence, reviews as it were from a height the vicissitudes of discoverer, pioneer and pilgrim, and shows the relative bearing of occurrences. The author fears not to intimate that Providence controls history. The homely, heroic story of the Puritans is brought home to the reader, and the Indian episodes are treated with justness, and without mawkish sentiment. Such books ensure their writer an honorable place in literature.

**Ulysses S. Grant** (1822–1885). After retiring from the Presidency, General Grant made a tour of the world, and then embarked in the banking business in New York. By the dishonesty of his partners, he was involved in financial troubles which lost him his fortune. At the same time, he was afflicted with an incurable disease. In order to leave his family with means of support, General Grant undertook to write the narrative of his part in the civil war. He carried out his purpose with the same grim pertinacity and courage that had characterized him in the conduct of his campaigns; holding death in check by force of will until his work was finished. But these "Personal Recollections" do not need extraneous circumstances to give them value. The narrative is direct, clear and of admirable temper; the writer's own share in the events is told with modesty and scrupulous adherence to truth; and the services of his comrades-in-arms, and of his opponents, are set down justly and generously. As the story of one of the important conflicts of

the world, told at first hand by one of the chief actors in it, this history is invaluable; but the simple, straightforward naturalness of the style in which it is written adds greatly to its worth. Entirely plain and unpretentious, it is nevertheless strong and dignified, and always adequate to the demands it has to meet. It is what the best style should be — the reflection of the character of the man who writes it. Without the refinements and polish of literary culture, it nevertheless belongs to literature, and illustrates how broadly catholic a thing good literature is.

**Jefferson Davis** (1808–1890) was a man of culture and scholarship, an eloquent speaker and a good writer. The leading part he played in the secession movement, and the inner knowledge he possessed of the Southern temper, traits and traditions, and of the causes which led to the civil war, render important his "Short History of the Confederate States of America." The book is written with candor and reasonable impartiality; documentary data for statements are always forthcoming, and the reader is made to recognize the personal integrity and devotion of the Southern leaders, and the heroism of her people. More recently has appeared "Jefferson Davis: A Memoir," the materials for which had been collected by Mr. Davis previous to his death, when they were edited and published by his widow. The book is an interesting and vivid account of a remarkable character and career, and covers the most stirring periods of our national history.

Among our military authors must also be mentioned **General William Tecumseh Sherman** (1820–1891), **General Philip Sheridan** (1831–1888) and **General George Brinton McClellan** (1826–1885), all of whom have published volumes of personal memoirs, valuable as contributions to the history of the civil war.

**T. J. Chapman** has published a short narrative of "The French in the Alleghany Valley," beginning in 1748, and coming down to 1784. It is well constructed and written, and may usefully

be read in connection with Parkman's histories. **Charles F. Richardson** has published, in two volumes, a scholarly and comprehensive work on "American Literature," from its beginning to the present day: and **Moses Coit Tyler's** "History of American Literature," though rather inclined to take a rose-colored view of our productions, is nevertheless a work of solid merit so far as it has yet gone.

### *Humorists.*

To label a writer a "humorist" is not, in this country and in our day, a satisfactory classification of him. The name humorist no longer bears the old English sense, but is applied to mere jesters and buffoons as well as to those who properly merit the title. Holmes and Lowell are humorists, not to speak of Warner, Harte, Hay and others of their rank. Yet to group them under the heading of American humorists would be misleading; they have wit, their productions are lightened by humor; but they do not live and write for the sole purpose of being funny. Very rarely there comes a man whose innate mental attitude or genius is so odd and exceptional, so out of keeping with the average and conventional point of view, that everything he thinks or says is irresistibly comical. He perceives relations that others have not detected; he brings near and remote together in a logical yet grotesque union; and when, in addition to these qualities and faculties, he is endowed with the literary gift, he is the very man we are looking for. Behind him come trooping a thousand incompetent or vulgar imitators, by whose inferiority we may measure his excellence, and who are as evanescent as he is enduring.

**"Artemus Ward"** (1834–1867), as Charles F. Browne was known to the public, was a man whose mind was as quaintly put together as were those of Shakespeare's clowns. He was an involuntary — though by no means an unconscious — fun-maker: his conceits were in his marrow, and were not more the result of intellectual effort than his breathing was. To his eye, the uni-

verse was not a universe, but a great incoherency. Wherever he looked, he beheld a manifest absurdity. Standards of behavior, habits of thought, modes of life, appeared to him inverted, arbitrary, illusive: he was impelled to reverse all precedent and order, and to make the planet roll from east to west. Had his mind stopped here, he would simply have been insane; but, in fact, he was a duplex phenomenon; few men had so clear a perception as he himself had of his own perversity. Hence he was a born humorist, and — if such a thing be predicable of fun-making — a born genius. On what may be called his sane side, he was possessed of exceptional good sense, insight and integrity; his nature was eminently catholic and sympathetic, so that what he felt was felt by the mass of his fellow-creatures. Browne never ridiculed anything that all the world was not ready to join him in ridiculing: an intellect more broadly representative than his was not to be found. He made his unreason serve his reason, and his nonsense became the most effective weapon of his sense. He lifted exaggeration into a science, and made it seem more lifelike than accuracy itself. He is a profoundly satisfying writer; his absurdities so exactly hit one's ideal of the absurd, that one rejoices in them as in a personal acquisition. Not the less is he always unexpected and incalculable: it is at the moment when you are least on your guard that he plants his most telling blows, yet there is apt to be a preposterous plausibility in his quips. Lecturing, once, in a place of entertainment in London known as the "Egyptian Hall" — "When the Egyptians built this hall," he began, and was interrupted, of course, by a roar of laughter. It was a natural thing to say; but was *too* natural for any one but him to have thought of saying.

**A perverse mind.**

Taking up one of his books now, you will be surprised to find how many of his jokes and sayings have been adopted by the nation, and have become incorporate in the language. It was he who said that an occasional joke improved a comic paper; that, when he drank, he never allowed business to interfere with it; that it would have

**Come to be common stock.**

been ten dollars in a certain distinguished statesman's pocket if he had never been born; that, "they said I had a future before me; up to that time I had an idea it was behind me"; that, "I really don't care for money; I only travel round to show my clothes." His eccentric spelling had a kind of humorous felicity in it, and seemed to get more out of a word than could be extracted by ordinary orthography. In the mouth of this imaginary showman it was also, oftentimes, a revelation of character. This showman, — Artemus, — by the way, is one of the solidest figures in the gallery of American fiction. To the public, for whom Browne wrote, he is still a much more real person than is Charles Farrar Browne himself. Certainly there could not be contrast greater than that between the blatant, vulgar, common, talkative, impudent old buffoon of the book, and the quiet, delicate, pensive, sensitive-looking young gentleman of the lecture-platform. And yet, before he had been speaking five minutes, you could understand how and why the creator of "Artemus" was his creator.

"Artemus Ward, His Book," "Artemus Ward, His Travels" and "Artemus Ward in London," are the titles of Browne's volumes. Several of his lectures — which were got up as a burlesque and satire of the pretentious Lyceum lectures of thirty years ago — have never been published, and are preserved only in the memories of his hearers. He spent the last year of his life in London, where he made many hearty friends; and he died of consumption in Southampton, with a jest on his lips. "It seems the fashion," he whispered to a friend at his bedside, "for every one to present the Prince of Wales with something. I think I shall leave him my panorama."

**"Mark Twain"** (Samuel L. Clemens) (1835–) was born in Missouri, and apprenticed to a printer. He made a two-years' visit to the East in 1851, and on his return served as a pilot on a Mississippi steamboat. At the age of twenty he was acting as reporter on a Nevada newspaper, and later he filled a similar position in San Francisco. He spent six months, in the inter-

ests of his paper, at the Sandwich Islands, and after coming back made a prosperous lecturing-tour. In 1867 he published, in New York, his "Jumping Frog" and other sketches, and the same year he joined a party of tourists in a voyage round the world, which he described in "The Innocents Abroad." "Roughing It" was his next book, depicting wild Western life. "Tom Sawyer" is the story of a boy's life; "Life on the Mississippi" portrays his experiences as a pilot; "The Prince and the Pauper" is a tale of early English history; "A Tramp Abroad" is the narrative of his second visit to Europe. All his books have had an immense and continuous popularity.

Mark Twain.

Mark Twain has keener eyes, a more retentive memory and a finer brain than occur once in ten thousand times; and he has, in addition, a queer, original humor and a remarkable literary faculty. If all the fun were left out of his books of travel, what remained would suffice to give him a high reputation as a writer.

**A humorist who is a literary artist.**

He sees things with wonderful clearness and correctness, and his descriptions are graphic, comprehensive and often poetically eloquent. But these orthodox merits inevitably fall into the background when the humorous fit seizes him. Some spark of comedy alights on his mind, and immediately begins to spread and kindle. There is no sudden explosion, or abrupt shock, nor is there a continuous fusillade, as in Browne's case; but the jest expands, gains impetus and force, and presently takes precedence of all else. Then we are carried onwards, and for a time all is quiet and regular; but, a page or a paragraph ahead, another seizure is awaiting us. Twain's jokes are captured by him in the rough and primitive state, and swiftly and rapidly

transformed into works of art; nothing is omitted that can give them full effect, nor, on the other hand, is there often a word or a touch too much. Twain, in fact, whether in jest or in earnest, is always and instinctively an artist; it is a necessity of his nature to perfect his work. In jest and in earnest alike he preserves the same serious and candid manner: in the telling of his most excruciating witticisms there is apt to be a touch of sadness, of pathos, of anxiety. Laughter seems to be a thing unknown to him; he looks you solemnly and innocently in the eye, and prattles with childish naïveté. His effects are cumulative; they linger in the mind not as sayings, or "points," but as pictures and situations. His genius thinks best when he is in movement: his best books are books of travel or adventure: indeed, he has written little outside of these categories. He seldom sits down to talk: he likes to lead the reader on from one scene to another, and the changing prospect stimulates his brain to fresh evolutions. His portrayals of character are second only to his sketches of scenery. When he chooses to be simply truthful, the photographic plate itself cannot outdo him; nay, he surpasses it, by giving the essential and shaping features, and leaving out the rest. There seems to be nothing that he cannot do, and do well: very seldom does he repeat himself; on the contrary, he is apt to invade totally new fields of literary enterprise, and with such success that one wonders whether this be not his truest vein, after all. He is never in a hurry, and though the amount of his production is not small, it contains internal evidence that he never writes without having something to say. Mark Twain's home is in Hartford, Connecticut, but he passes his summers in Elmira, New York.

The number of "humorists" who have sprung into existence since Artemus Ward became famous, is past computation. **C. H. Webb** ("John Paul") was a contemporary of Artemus's: he was the founder of the "Californian," to which Mark Twain and Bret Harte were early contributors; and he was the publisher of Twain's "Jumping Frog" volume. His humor is of a high

order: it has been chiefly in the form of contributions to the daily press. **Eugene Field** (1850–) has for ten or twelve years written a daily column of irony, in a vein of his own discovery, which he monopolizes, in the Chicago "Daily News"; but he is also a very charming poet, and has written a number of admirable children's stories and poems. "A Little Book of Western Verse" and "A Little Book of Profitable Tales" are the titles of two of his volumes. **"Bill Nye"** (Edward W. Nye) is one of the most popular comic writers. **"Josh Billings"** (H. W. Shaw) was a homely philosopher who dealt in shrewd aphorisms and bad spelling. **"Bob Burdette"** is a teller of comic anecdotes. **B. P. Shillaber** (1814–1891) ("Mrs. Partington") was a sort of American elaborator of Sheridan's "Mrs. Malaprop"; and **James Whitcomb Riley** is the author of both humorous dialect and pathetic poems. The daily and weekly newspapers are crowded with the paragraphs of nameless wits and wittols; and no magazine is complete without its "humorous department" in the rear, or intertwined with its advertisements. Americans are a hard-working people, and they like to laugh, and richly reward those who can make them do so. But when the era arrives of more contentment and less competition, of less "life" and more living, the humorists will disappear, with the need for them.

## A List of Books that will be useful to the Student of American Literature.

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**American Literature.** Professor Charles F. Richardson. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

This is, perhaps, the most complete and competent general survey of our literature to be had at this time.

**A History of American Literature.** Professor Moses Coit Tyler. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

This is the most able volume of criticism that has appeared in our country. It covers the Colonial period of our literature; the books of this period are not generally accessible, and Professor Tyler's work is the more useful in that its copious extracts enable us to dispense with the ponderous volumes themselves.

**Poets of America.** Edmund C. Stedman.

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**American Men of Letters Series.** Edited by Charles Dudley Warner. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

This excellent series contains lives of many of our noted authors written by some of our most competent critics. The books are systematic and succinct in treatment, and embody the most essential facts and criticisms of their subjects. They are models for the guidance of young students.

**Library of American Literature.** Stedman and Hutchinson. Ten volumes. Chas. L. Webster & Co.

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**The Riverside Literature Series.** H. M. & Co.

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Houghton, Mifflin & Co. publish the works of most of our other standard poets: of LONGFELLOW, WHITTIER, TAYLOR, LOWELL, HOLMES, and others.

Good anthologies are Bryant's "LIBRARY OF POETRY AND SONG" and Emerson's "PARNASSUS."

The list might be extended indefinitely; only the books most conspicuously useful have been mentioned.

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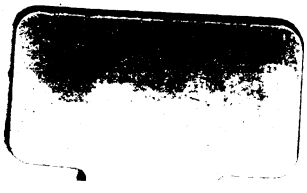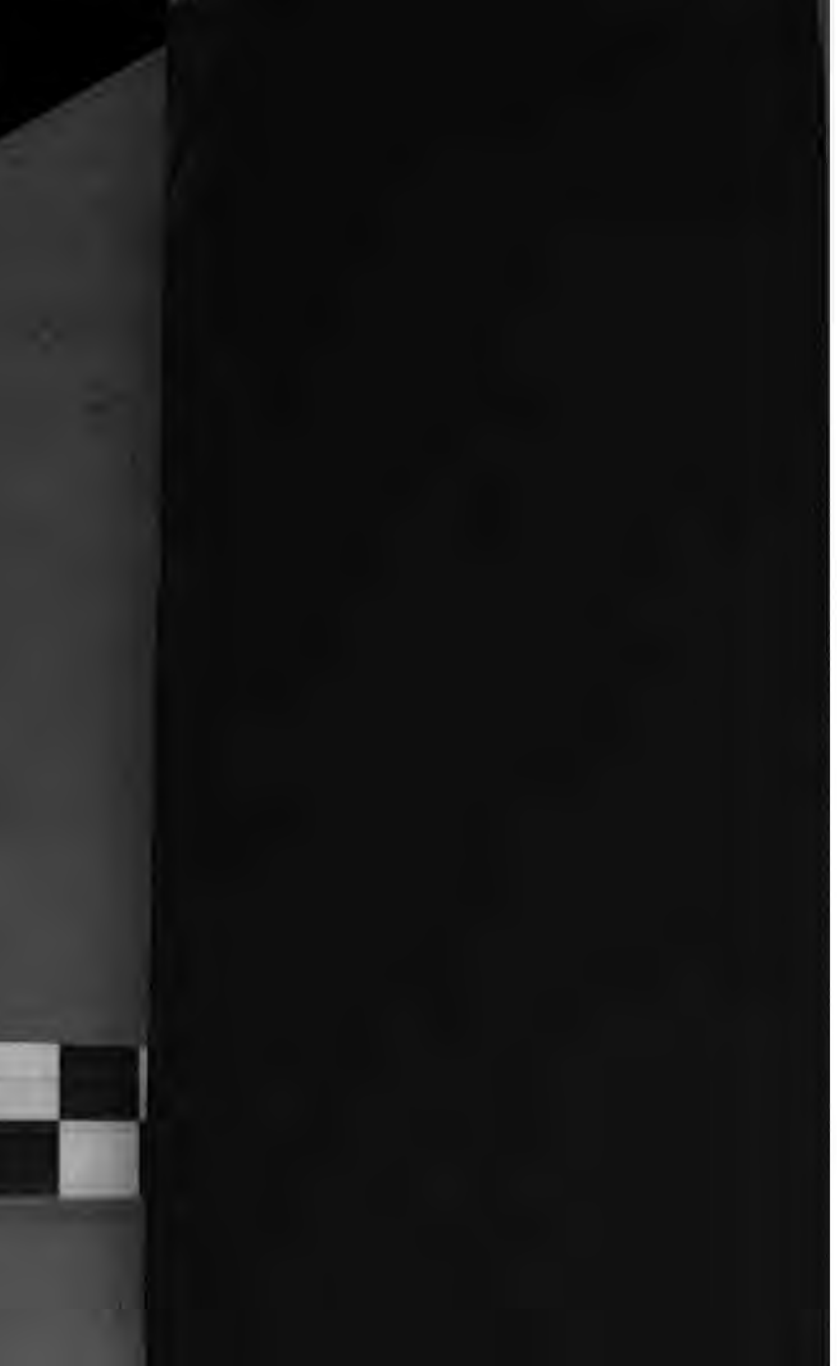
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